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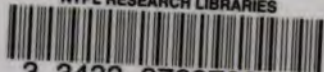
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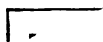
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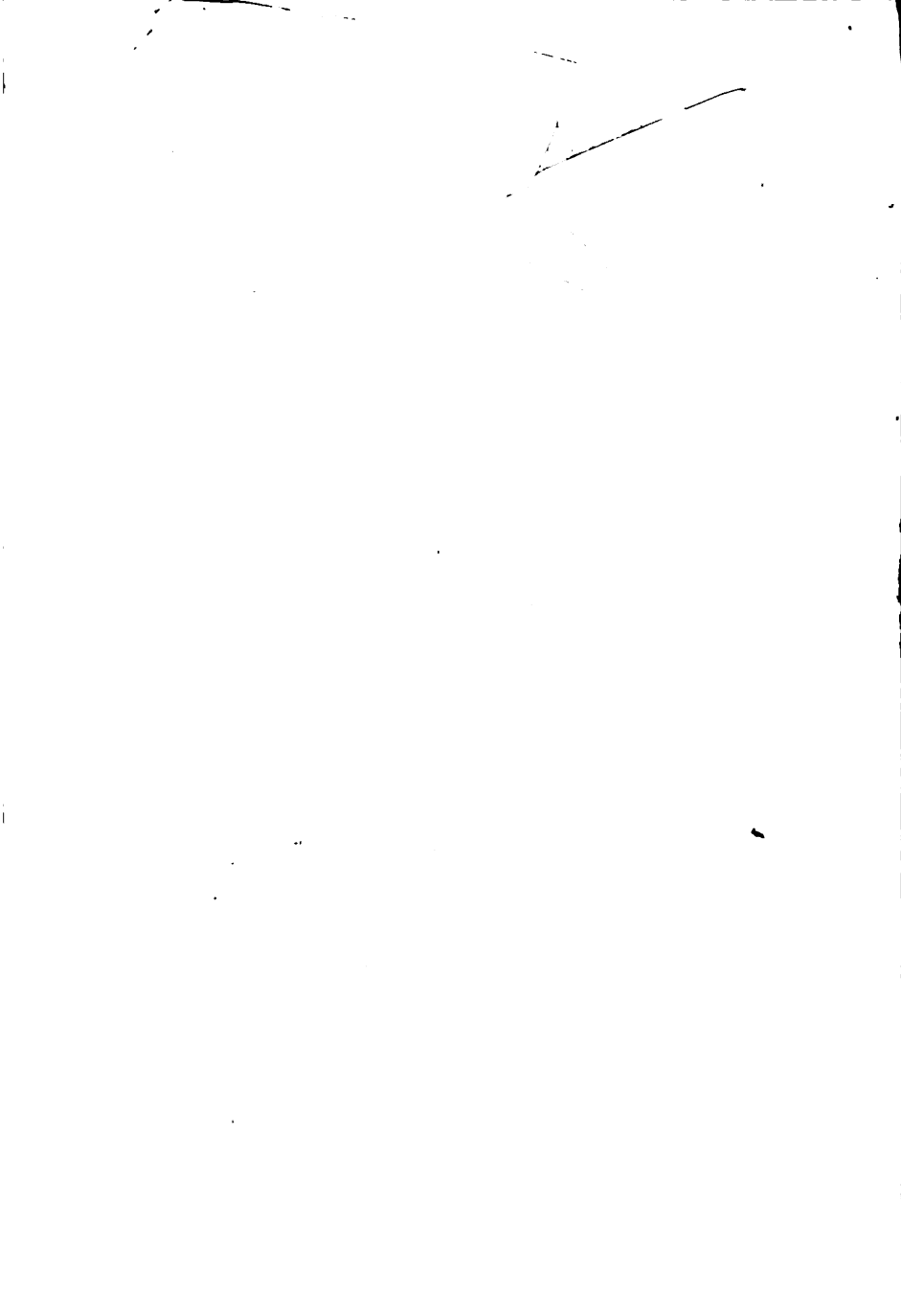


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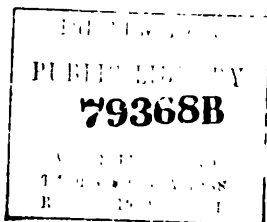
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AUTHOR OF
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HEART AND CHART

I

THE DRESS WITH THE BLUE RIBBONS

I KNOW now that I must have thought it little less than heroic when I made up my mind that I would go into training—"become a member of the toiling masses" was how I phrased it to myself at that period. It had been planned that I should have my coming-out tea during the winter; but it was then that my father lost most of his money in a suburban subdivision that subdivided but didn't sell, and he began to look worried, and mother began to say that she really must go over the bills and see why they were so large. I probably felt that I was renouncing splendors, for I distinctly remember an exceedingly blank sensation at the way the family received the news.

Mother was the only one upon whom the fact that I had been accepted as a probationer at

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Densmore made the proper effect; but I found I didn't like being wept over as much as I had supposed I would. It seemed silly, somehow, to have such a fuss made over one not particularly remarkable girl—even if we were the Alysons who spell the name with one “l” and a “y.” Of course there is nothing that destroys a foolish idea like having some one in your family hold it. Mother plainly thought that Iphigenia's sacrifice was a frivolous affair compared with mine. For weeks she insisted on having extra meals served to me at all hours, whenever I happened to be off duty and at home. She declared that it was necessary to “keep up my strength.” And it was evident she felt what was, for so mild a being as herself, resentment toward father and Ned for allowing the desecration.

Now all this was a long time ago, more than four years. I was an inexperienced and ignorant girl then, selfish like all young things. In the years of training a whole new world opened to me—a world which seemed nothing but a great field for service. Why—in my last year at Densmore I volunteered to do charity work!

Densmore was founded, you know, with the intention of fitting girls to do philanthropic work in connection with the church; nursing at least one “charity case” was supposed to be part of



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the course. As a matter of fact, most of the girls shirked it, which was easy enough to do before Miss Sheldon came to take charge. Only those who were being fitted to be deaconesses were really obliged to follow the rule. I am not entirely convinced, now, that I volunteered because I wanted to carry out Mr. Kent's theories about social service, or whether it was because I wanted to shock him. It was a temptation to see how he would look when he found out that I had been nursing Mrs. Maloney; for that was the name of the case—I chose the poorest one they had. Any one will understand that a girl of that age just had to find out whether Mr. Kent was absorbed in thinking about the toiling masses, or whether he had as much chivalry as he looked as if he ought to have from the lovely way he had of bringing you flowers.

When I registered at the office Miss Sheldon looked at me curiously.

"Are you sure you have quite made up your mind?" she asked, so kindly that I was surprised. She had always been so impersonal—but, of course, the superintendent has to be that. "The woman is very poor, with an inexcusable number of children and a drunken husband. The Associated Charities reported the case to us. She is worn out and discouraged; there is no relative

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in the city to take care of the children if she should be taken to the hospital. You will find the conditions squalid."

"After nearly three years of training I ought not to mind anything," I said.

Miss Sheldon smiled.

"You will find private nursing—at the Maloneys'—somewhat different from hospital work. However, I hope you will succeed. At least it will be an interesting experience for Mrs. Maloney." And she smiled again, this time so approvingly that I felt as if I must tell her that it wasn't a worthy motive that was taking me to the charity case, but an unworthy desire to shock Mr. Kent. But the next instant I realized that she had never met Mr. Kent.

When I had finally started for the Maloney house (they lived out southeast somewhere that was whole squares—dirty squares—away from a car line) I began to realize that, as Miss Sheldon had said, private nursing would probably be a very different thing. At the hospital you always have the other girls to brace you up and make you determined to prove that you can do more than they can, make neater dressings and tighter bandages and straighter beds. The young internes are so enthusiastic about it all. Then the doctors who lecture to us—the popular ones—

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are always putting in something about nursing being such a noble profession. So, even when you are a probationer, it is only occasionally that you ask yourself whether you are really many degrees above a charwoman—with tasks that a charwoman would refuse to do.

I hadn't thought to ask Miss Sheldon what the case was. But when I reached the little two-story frame house, had knocked, and the door was opened right on the room where Mrs. Maloney sat, I knew. I had only just finished my term as night superintendent of Ward B. It is pitiful what caricatures of womanhood maternity does make; it always seems such an indignity. There were two other women with Mrs. Maloney, and they both had inhuman sorts of figures, but she, poor thing, was the worst. Grotesque, misshapen, heavy-eyed, and hopeless—she looked at me as if she resented my being there.

"I am the nurse from Densmore." I felt apologetic as I explained.

"'Tis in ye're mother's home ye sh'd be," she said, severely. "Phwat does a young thing like yez know about grown people's ills?"

The other women nodded grimly. Together, they made me feel that they resented my being twenty-one and not being married. They evidently expected me to return to Densmore. It

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makes your face hot to realize that you are in a place where people don't want you. Then I remembered what Miss Sheldon had told us in one of her lectures: "If the patient is antagonistic, speak in soothing, non-combative tone; it is even admissible to administer a *placebo* of some pleasant and harmless drug. Your duty is, above all, to please the patient." The soothing tone seemed to be the only practicable weapon—Mrs. Maloney was not in a state of mind to yield to any *placebo* in the pharmacopœia.

"Suppose we wait until the doctor comes, and see?" I smiled, soothingly.

"And who is the docther the Boord is sindin' this toime?" spoke up one of the others—a tall and brawny woman, with skin tanned until it looked like wrapping-paper, and two keen eyes, unexpectedly blue. "It's Docther Emery I'm hopin' they're sindin'. Himself will have no other."

"That same w'd be the bist ricommindation for not bein' afther havin' him av we were spakin' iv Maloney, which, praise be, we're not," put in Mrs. Maloney, gloomily.

"P'r'aps it's Docther Adams that'll come," said the other woman, the languor of whose appearance was increased by what had originally been a white plume in her battered black hat.

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What its former career had been there was no way to guess, but at some time the feather had lost most of its plumules, all of its curl, and retained only its inclination to droop. "It's a kind man is Docther Adams," she went on, sentimentally. "Whin I was that bad he tuk me hand in his and said, 'Me poor che-yild!' And he said it rale tinder—"

Of course you couldn't help looking at her when she said this and—really there wasn't anything in her face to show that she hadn't been born sixty-five. I caught Mrs. Maloney's eye, and she let herself smile.

"Ye'd betther ta-ak off ye're hat," she said to me, evidently liking me better since we had exchanged silent confidences about her friend. "'Twud ta-aksomethin' more than callin' me 'che-yild'"—turning to the others—"to be charmin' me at that moment. 'Tis few indayrements I'm satisfied wid thin. Whin a docther—and a man at that—that makes most of his money off the troubles of fool women the loikes of us—the Boord pays him av we don't—comes in wid his, 'Well, now, Mrs. Maloney, how ar-re we gettin' along—nicely, I see'—'tis a gra-ate wondher I'm not flingin' the flat-iron at his smile whin it's handy to use, seein' I've on'y just put it down. And this wake's ironin' not yit done by that same

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token. Ye can ta-ak the ironin'-board aff that table, miss—" she called out to me, understanding perfectly that I was looking around for a surgical stand. I had come in my uniform so I could go right to work getting ready.

"It's a woman docther that Mrs. Maloney wud be afther havin'," put in the drooping woman, with fine satire.

A gleam of wicked amusement shot across Mrs. Maloney's imperturbable face.

"Sure, Mrs. Rooney, the on'y kind of surgeon that I'd feel fri'ndly wid wud be the mother of twilve. Though how that poor sowl w'd iver get beyant the fir-rst page of the books docthers do be afther havin' to study is more than I can see. But since 'tis a man, the laste he can do is to look sad enough to suit me feelin's and not come in rubbin' his hands and lookin' as happy as if 'twas an afthernoon tay that I'd been afther sindin' him a car-rd for—by a futman. No, 'tis not Docther Adams that I'm carin' for—"

"I believe Doctor Dietrich is to have charge of the case." I felt that it was really time that I should come forward. As I spoke I began taking some bottles out of the bag—Densmore always sends a surgical outfit in such cases. Mrs. Maloney turned with difficulty and regarded the various bottles with an experienced eye.

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Mrs. Rooney faintly rallied herself. You could see she was one of the women who keep up an argument forever. But a shiver ran over Mrs. Maloney's body in its dingy brown calico wrapper. I glanced at her face.

"I think the patient would be better alone with me now," I said.

Mrs. Rooney leaned back in her chair, limply, but with determination.

"Will you please telephone for the doctor?" I went on, looking peacefully at her—"the drug-store at the corner will do."

She still sat in her chair. Then I picked up her shawl, and stood, waiting for her to put it on. With a final flutter of meek defiance she stood.

As the two women left the room, Mrs. Rooney breathing a distrustful sigh, the patient turned to me. She looked at me a minute, then she nodded her head.

"Mary Rooney niver before was frightened off widout havin' her say," she said. "Ye don't look as if ye were a wake out of short dresses. Yit I'm thinkin' ye'll do." But she didn't know how easy it is to get the right tone after you have had a few days' practice in the Free Ward.

"Is there anything in the matter of baby clothes that you would like to have me attend to for you?" I asked. Then, as a flush that was

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not from pain came to her face: "Something you have not had time to attend to? I can send to Densmore; they always have more than they can use."

Mrs. Maloney smiled—before I left her I found out that the smile was her characteristic one; there was some bitterness in it, and a sort of tolerant amusement at the queerness of things.

"No, thank ye, miss." She had said so much when she stopped, gripped the arms of her chair, and breathed hard. "I have enough"—her voice was almost natural—"of that kind—enough to kape the poor little sowl that's comin' war'm—though 'tis not much can be said for the looks of 'em. I'll get 'em." She tried to rise, but I stopped her.

"Tell me where they are, Mrs. Maloney; I'm here to wait on you, you know." And when I found the poor little pile, something—perhaps it was the way I handled them, for the coarse, unlovely things made me think of other little gowns I had seen—made Mrs. Maloney think she could tell me things.

"Whin I was expectin' Eileen"—she didn't look at me at all, but kept her eyes on her hands as if she wanted to fix in her memory how it looked to see them idle—"she was my fir-rst—I made some ra-al neat bits of clothes, wid cam-

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bric and feather-stitchin' and ra-al flannen 'stid of canton-flannen. But there was wan thing that I wanted—" She stopped and gave a gulp. "I said to Maloney—'twas young and tinder I was in thim days, and I thought himself might care what the little wan had on whin we tuk it to the praste—the more fool I. I said, 'Tim,' says I, 'I'd loike to have some ra-al fine embrydery beadin' for wan of the little dhresses, the kind they have in the stores on F Street, and run blue ribbons in it'—for blue was the color that wint wid me eye and hair whin I wor a young thing—'twas what I wore the day I fir-rst saw Tim—and I felt sure 'twud be the same wid the wan I was waitin' for. But Maloney he give a laugh, little carin', and he said—not ugly at that time; he wasn't but just ma-aking little of what I wanted—'I'll get it if I can remimber not to f'rget it,' he said. 'But it's quare av ye can't find somethin' at Riley's that's good enough f'r y'rsilf and y'r childer.' And that bein' Satur-da' he spint most of his pay before he got home, and lost some, and 'twas nothin' but a fifty-cent piece in his pocket to go the wake on. So I got somethin' at Riley's." She paused. "And the nixt toime—"

"Did you get it the next time?" I asked. You couldn't help hoping she had. For I re-

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member how darling the little things Evelyn made were. Why, even Evelyn enjoyed sewing on them, and she was cross enough about it most of the time.

"The nixt toime," she said, shortly—"and 'twere little Tim that toime—I had to pay for the bits of clothes myself out of the washin' money. And there was no beadin' that toime—nor since. And annyway, there's niver been a gurl since—so what diff'ence does it make?" she added, with a sort of a laugh.

We neither of us said anything for a minute, but I began to take her hair down and brush it—and you know it does make you feel better to have your hair brushed.

"But somehow I feel as if this wan w'd be a gurl," she said, suddenly.

And then I had an inspiration. I looked at the clock and thought a minute. There might be time enough.

"Mrs. Maloney"—still there wouldn't be a moment to lose—"could one of your children take a note up-town for me?"

"Sure, little Tim will ta-ak it." She let her head fall back wearily. "He's got the most sinse of anny av thim. They're in there." She motioned to the inner room. I had thought they must be in there; all sorts of noises had

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been coming through the closed doors. "It's Saturda' and a rainy day, so they've had to stay in the house, and—ye'd bist shut the dure as soon as ye've spoken—av ye're wise."

I shut it behind me quickly, so the noise wouldn't disturb the patient—and, honestly, I felt almost frightened for a minute, the children looked so wild. The room Mrs. Maloney was in was poor enough, though it looked positively surgically clean, and it's a relief when people don't have the room they are going to be sick in cluttered up with things you have to put away in bureau drawers, and hangings that you have to take down. But this—!

It was the kitchen. A thick-set little girl, Eileen, of course, was trying to wash some dishes in a sink at the farther end. But she had to stop two or three times while I was looking at them to pull the smaller of two boys, who were pounding each other, from under. The rest of the time she was shouting commands at the other three which none of them heard. Another size of boy was marching up and down the room, blowing a piercing whistle and pounding as much with his heels as he conveniently could. A little chap of about three, who ought to have been in dresses but was in very bunchy trousers, was smearing bread and molasses over every

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inch of his face and most of his hair—not that it made much difference; the instant the food was dried you couldn't tell it from the other dirt. The only tranquil creature in the room was a dear little mite who was trying to put a battered doll to sleep under the kitchen table. Even if it was going to grow up to be a noisy, quarrelsome boy, it was a cuddly baby thing at that moment.

I was confused for a minute by the noise. But no one who has been near the nursery at Densmore when it is near feeding-time could be daunted by mere infant Maloneys. I have often thought that if some one could orchestrate the swelling chorus that rises at that time, it would be an entirely original *motif*. The plaintive, flute-like lamentations of one or two babies rise and fall; others join in; they merge into an orchestral storm in which the eternal hunger of the race finds expression, with a secondary theme of despair at frustrated hopes. It's a marvel to me that Strauss or some other composer who is looking for new sensations to express in music, doesn't utilize this.

But just at this time I remembered Miss Sheldon's instructions:

"When there is apparently more for your one pair of hands to do than four pairs of hands could successfully accomplish—which is the usual

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dilemma of the trained nurse—take a quiet five minutes and make an elaborate diagram of the situation. You will find it time saved.” So I diagramed the Maloneys.

As a result, Tim arose from his seat on his brother’s chest and started on his way to Sixteenth Street with a note from me to mother. Eileen was telling one of the two fighting boys what to do to clean up the room; the next one was washing some of the molasses and other things from the face of the next one. And the baby, who had fallen asleep while the doll still stared with open eyes, I carried off myself to put to bed in an upper room.

When Eileen had shown me where things were and I had made a good strong cup of coffee for the patient—for Eileen said she had eaten nothing that day, and it was then almost noon—I went to Mrs. Maloney again. When she saw me coming with the cup and saucer, milk and sugar, on a big plate—for I couldn’t find a tray—I think her eyes filled with tears. She drank it without a word. But when I got her ready, waiting on her in the way you learn to do in training, pleasant and yet entirely impersonal, she burst out:

“Sure, the angels must be expectin’ me this time, alanna, and that’s why they sint wan of

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thimsilves here to get me in a good humor wid 'em." There was the sly intention of Irish blarney in her eye; but the restfulness with which she settled back when I had finished her made me feel that she really meant some of it. "'Tis niver before the saints have throubled thimsilves, and they've had sivin chances at it. 'Av we c'd on'y dhress thim right, in little soft dhresses loike I've seen in the par-rks, wid small edgin' of lace and foine embrydery beadin' wid the palest blue ribbon run through it—the color that wint wid me eyes and hair whin"—her voice was cut off short, and she bowed her head and twisted her shoulders with the effort of restraint—"whin I was a gurl," she went on, but her voice had become dry, choked. "I've heerd some of the Boord visitors talkin' about us. 'You needn't worry,' said wan av thim to a young lady that was more loike yez. 'They wouldn't know a thing that was in good taste when they saw it.'" She got up and began pacing the room up and down.

I was becoming nervous. I wished rather feverishly that the doctor would come—or little Tim—but perhaps Eileen could run out and telephone. It was one thing to have a case at Densmore with the whole hospital system to fall back on, but here—! Perhaps it would have been

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better not to have been so magnificent about sending the women away; Mrs. Rooney, of course, was hopeless, but the other one might have been of some help—in case—. Was Doctor Dietrich fussy? I wondered. I had never nursed for him before. My hands were beginning to shake a little as I took out a record chart and wrote Mrs. Maloney's name at the head of it.

"Date? October. What day of the month is it, Mrs. Maloney?" I asked.

The door creaked again, and in came Doctor Dietrich and little Tim together.

I had never spoken to Doctor Dietrich. I never care to know the doctors socially; that seems to me to be mixing up two irreconcilable things; and it is easier to be impersonal with a man whom you wouldn't recognize on the street—some of the girls at the hospital thought I was so silly about this. But I did want to take Doctor Dietrich aside and warn him not to look pleasant or rub his hands or do anything to give Mrs. Maloney the impression that he thought he had received, by a footman, a card for an afternoon tea. But there was no need to worry. The surgeon made his entrance with a strictly business-like attention to work. He favored both Mrs. Maloney and myself with a curt inclination of the head, which was returned by

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Mrs. Maloney with a scowl of dark defiance. While he was taking off his coat and making a hurried scrutiny of my arrangements, the patient whispered to me, in entire satisfaction:

"He's not one of the kind that 'll howld me hand and say, 'Me poor che-yild.'" I hurriedly assured her that I thought she had nothing on that score to fear. The doctor unconsciously confirmed my promise when, after giving me a few terse instructions, he sat down with a bored and detached expression.

It was then that I found the moment to unwrap the wicker hamper that Tim had shyly given me before he made his escape. They were lying on the scented and padded lining, the dainty and exquisitely simple little garments that Aunt Mary had given to me, saying, with the tears running down her face: "Do, please, get them out of the way; give them to some one—any one. I don't dare to think of what might happen if Evelyn should see them when she comes home."

I turned them over hurriedly—soft little slips, French embroidered frocks, silky flannels with graceful, slender lines of shining embroidery—oh, the darling, funny baby shirts, fashioned as softly as if a mother had woven every one! Yes, there it was, the only trace of color in the white-

DRESS WITH BLUE RIBBONS

ness, the little dress of soft, sheer cambric with "foine embrydery beadin' wid de palest blue ribbon run through it!"

Mrs. Maloney had sunk down into her chair, crouched forward, hopeless eyes fixed in front of her, in a paralysis of dull submission. When I spoke she gave an uninterested glance over her shoulder.

"Here are some little things, Mrs. Maloney," I said, gently, "sent by a woman who was not as fortunate as you, for her little baby never breathed."

Still she looked with glazed, uninterested eyes as I shook out the fragrant folds of each small garment. Then she saw it.

"Holy Mary! 'tis the darlin' av a dhress I dramed about. Sure, miss—" She tried to say more, but her voice caught in her throat. I myself found little to say while we looked over the little clothes together. I found her joy—silencing.

I roused myself to see Mrs. Maloney again at her dogged walk up and down the room. Then I saw that she had, clasped tight in her hands, the dainty frock with the blue ribbons. When her lips relaxed, her smile was so full of a worn tenderness that I felt wonder, almost awe.

Still the doctor sat in his chair, impassive, impersonal, and we three waited.

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Like vagrant wisps of mist came recollections of the time when I was night superintendent of Ward B. One night four mothers were swept onward to their test. One—a Free Ward patient I remember—was so heroic that she made even the hospital people, used alike to heroism and cowardice, wonder; one, in the highest-priced room at Densmore, was proudly still. What kind of women will it make of us, I wonder, crude girls, to be so callously near to the moments that break men's souls, and be outside of it all?

The creak of Mrs. Maloney's door brought me back to the present moment. A head was thrust into the room. I had not a moment's doubt that it was Maloney.

Maloney was red and bloated and bleary-eyed. The shoulders that cautiously followed the head were heavy. They had once been powerful, but muscle had degenerated into fat. The moist unsteadiness of his eyes would have told where he had spent the morning, even did not a rank odor float past him into the room. With a grimace of silly ill-humor he turned to creep out again. But his eye caught the heap of fine and dainty clothing. I could see the thought that there was something salable leap to his whisky-sodden brain.

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A low moan from Mrs. Maloney brought the impassive doctor alertly to his feet, and I hurried to her side. Not so quickly but that I saw Maloney lurch toward the clothing. His wife saw it, too.

A minute had passed and we three relaxed, the doctor impassive, but with a suggestion of resourcefulness in his waiting. There would be a moment, and I took it.

Just outside the door I found Maloney fumbling with paper and string. I put one hand on the untidy bundle.

"You will give me this." There is a certain tone which we all unconsciously used at Densmore in controlling alcoholics.

Maloney had, for all his blotchy degradation, a queer suggestion of Celtic jauntiness. He pulled tipsily away from me.

"Do noshin' of the sort, mish." His voice had a wet huskiness, as if his vocal cords were swimming in a bath of beer.

"I'll report you to the police." I was breathing hard—I had so little time.

"Polishe be dam—saving your presence, miss." He pulled off his cap with an absurd recollection of jocose gallantry.

"Your poor wife," I said, emotionally, hoping that I might tap the sentimental vein that follows

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the quarrelsome with some alcoholics. "She is so ill, and she will be so terribly disappointed."

He blew his nose to mark the tenderness of his sympathy. But he changed the bundle to the hand farther away from me, and sidled out of reach. I followed him and put my hand on his sleeve.

"I'll report you to the Board, and you'll never get help from them again, even in the coldest winter, with all work shutting down." But he was drunk enough to be grandly careless.

"Don't care." He waved help away. "Don' need work. Got a lotthrey ticket." Then, when I tried to pull the package from him, he became ugly.

"Shee here, don' wan' hur-rt a purty gur-rl—but—" He made a threatening gesture.

I couldn't stay. I was at the end of my resources. An idea came to me. I spoke to him impressively.

"I will have you taken up to Judge Spencer for not supporting your family. And I will tell him to send you to the Cure—I know Judge Spencer—oh, I have ever so much influence. And they will give you a treatment that will make you very sick when you taste whisky. And you will never be able to drink whisky or gin or brandy or even beer again without being

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very sick. The Cure will spoil the taste of whisky for you forever."

This time he was moved.

"Spoil the taste av the cratur, is ut?" he whispered. "What w'd I be livin' for then? Lose the taste av ut?" His lips moved noiselessly, framing words of distress. He stood, evidently trying to picture to himself a world with his one joy shut out. At the end of his considering he turned and unsteadily fled, leaving the spoils in my hand.

There is, in the life of every mother, one moment when she is beautiful. No matter how harsh her features, how crude or dry her tints, for a fleeting instant the jarring elements are fused into harmony, for she is at rest. It is a hard-won rest; it lingers, pulsating, while she knows that she has tasted fruition. Then the great machine that grinds out the universe resumes its creaking, groaning progress; the wheel smites her as it passes, and she is bruised. But she has known rest, she alone of earth's struggling millions. The memory of it abides with her. It brings her visions of eternal harmonies, when the jarring elements of her life shall have become fused, not for an instant, but for all time. So I had interpreted the soft radiance I had seen linger in the midst of sordidness on

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many a mother's face. That was what was in Mrs. Maloney's eyes when I put the warm little bundle into her arms.

"Oh, the darlin'!" she said, weakly. "'Tis the little dhress wid the embrydery and the blue ribbons that ye've put on her—I knew ye wud. 'Twas the blue that wint wid me eyes and hair—wud ye belave it—whin I wor a young thing. 'Twill loike be her color, too."

She put her wrenched arms around the baby girl and fondled it softly with the torn hands.

It was the January after the time that Doctor Dietrich had packed up his instruments and put on his coat; three months from the day that he and Mrs. Maloney had parted with mutual, unexpressed esteem. It was my Sunday afternoon off duty and I had been walking through the Mall. When I had passed the queer jumble of buildings that make up the Agricultural Department, my feet insensibly carried me east—for I was thinking. When I was actually not far from the street in which the Maloneys lived I suddenly realized that I wanted to see Mrs. Maloney—and the baby even more.

When I was within sight of the house, I saw many of the neighborhood women were passing in and out. I recognized Mrs. Rooney, even

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without the whitish feather in her hat. She was just coming down the steps. Then I saw that there was crape on the door.

It was startling.

"Poor woman!" I thought. "She must have been less strong than she seemed." There was a real pang in the thought.

In the front room where I had first seen Mrs. Maloney there was a group of neighbors that made the small place seem crowded. They were gathered about something long and dark, with tapers at the head and foot. With a shudder I passed through.

In the little kitchen sat Mrs. Maloney! I drew a long breath and counted the children. There were six, and one of Mrs. Maloney's substantial feet was on the rocker of the cradle. Then it was only Maloney, after all!

The children, in various attitudes of discomfort and forced quiet, were in black, each one in new, stiff, sooty, creaking, oppressively new and respectable black. Mrs. Maloney advanced to meet me, a large, beautifully laundered handkerchief at her eyes.

"'Tis the pa-apers must have towld yez."

"We had an adverti-isement in the pa-aper!" chimed in as many young Maloneys as could enunciate, in a prideful chorus.

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The widow held out a large, capable hand.

"Will yez come in and see himself?" with ceremony.

She led the way, followed by myself and all the mourning band, all save the occupant of the cradle, the creaking of the various sizes of new shoes producing a marching chorus that sang of prosperity.

In the other room a different group of neighbors made way with decorum that we might find place beside the casket. Mrs. Maloney gazed at her husband with an inscrutable countenance, the young Maloneys with impassive faces.

"'Twas a foine lad ye wor, Tim," the widow spoke at length. The audience sighed respectfully. "There wor no foiner wan in th' auld counthry." She turned to me. "He wor that handsome that all the gurls wor daft about him—it's the happy days those were!"

I am an impressionable being, and I felt my eyes fill with tears, the kind that embarrass you because they are too large to wink away.

"After all, love is deathless," I thought, in my sentimental girl's soul. "In spite of neglect, abuse, she remembers."

But the widow continued:

"Ah, ye raskil!" She was shaking her fist. "I fooled yez at the last. Niver give me a cint,

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wudn't yez? Niver give me even a ribbon, wudn't yez? Well, ye did and niver knew it. *I had yer loife insured!* And on'y wan year ago, praise be!"

Each member of the company tried in her own way to look as if this were the usual valedictory. The only one entirely unembarrassed was the widow. She thoughtfully pulled down her belt in front. And that called attention to the fact that Mrs. Maloney had developed a waist. Her mourning was becoming, her large face was rosy; in the blue Irish eyes was—something that had not been there before.

"Yes, Tim wor a handsome lad," she repeated, meditatively, while the detachment of neighbors filed out. "A foine lar-rge man—I niver loiked thim shmall. He wor a bit loike Policeman Brady," she said, slowly—"him that lost his woife last Novimber."

"It's good you have the children," I said, stupidly, since it was evident something must be said.

"Yes," she said, "and boys too—and only two gurls to look out for—as Brady says. He says mine are such foine lads—he likes boys, does Brady—most of his are gurls. And he's koind to thim, is Brady." She turned her speculative gaze on me. Then I knew what had

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come into her eyes. It was the watchful expectancy of the mating female.

I followed her into the kitchen in silence.

"Don't ye want to see the baby?" she asked. And when I had politely acquiesced she lifted the little thing out of the cradle. Such a darling baby, pink and dimpled, blue-eyed and cuddly, and crowing with such endearing explosiveness. She wore the little frock that had been made for Evelyn's baby. But through the beading were run ribbons of lusterless black!

"I hated to ta-ak out the blue ribbons," said Mrs. Maloney, her chin on the little head. "She wor that swate in 'em—I knew she wud be that. 'Twas the color that wint wid me eyes and hair whin I wor a young thing. 'Tis Brady that remimbers a blue calico dhress I had two years ago—wud ye belave it?"

This was too much. All the too keen sympathy I had felt for her, the number of times during the intervening months that the thought of the baby and the little dress and the poor torn hands had brought the tears to my eyes, turned to anger and went into my tone as I said:

"I think it is shameful to put this—lie—on the dear little baby. You—" But I stopped; it was absurd to have any feeling.

Mrs. Maloney was silent for a minute, finger-

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ing the crisp black folds of her gown. Then the blue eyes filled with tears, and the something that had come into them was washed away. They might have been the baby's own.

"She's the only wan av us all that has a right to th' black." She made me part of her sorrow as simply as a child would have done. "I can kape her fr'm knowin' what he wor. Och—to think av ut"—she was sobbing—"the on'y wan av all our childer that's a right to mourn!"

After all, I never did tell Mr. Kent about nursing Mrs. Maloney.

II

THE GOUT

THE first case I had when I was out of training was disappointing in some ways. You always feel, in the beginning, a special pride in working hard. A complicated surgical case, with all sorts of post-operative developments, is your preference. Later on, of course, it's different. But at Senator Oglethorpe's I was never sure that I worked at all. And yet—often I feel that I accomplished something rather important. The next moment I may be of another opinion.

It was Doctor Graham who 'phoned for me to take the case. I tried to be cool and professional when I asked Doctor Graham what the case was.

"Arthritis podagra," came over the 'phone. He must have realized from my little gasp of silence that I didn't know—just at that moment—what he meant; for he explained instantly: "Gout, you know, of the foot."

"Is—is it dangerous?" I asked.

This time his voice sounded amused.

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"Not necessarily." Then he added, as an afterthought: "Although I am keeping him in bed because there is some danger of its attacking the heart. There is considerable tumefaction and redness. And it is exceedingly painful." His voice became louder and more impressive. "The patient is irritable, as is quite common in such cases. You will find that he has a morbid terror of your touching the affected foot. I have protected it with raw cotton, and the dressing is not to be disturbed. On no account is it to be disturbed," he repeated, impressively.

"But what am I to do?" I asked.

He must have been amused at my disappointment, for he laughed. There really isn't anything unpleasant about Doctor Graham's laugh. It is big and hearty and resounding—but I never liked to hear it at the hospital. And now it boomed into the receiver and hurt my ear, and made me indignant without knowing the reason why.

"You will find enough to do to keep the patient from moving," he said, pleasantly. "He must be amused and kept quiet. And above all"—his voice got louder and more impressive again—"he must be kept from worrying. He is impatient to be out and in his place at the

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Senate—by the way, it is Senator Oglethorpe; you know his place on Massachusetts Avenue, don't you? A bill is coming up on the 25th that his constituents are interested in, and he is fretting himself into a fever for fear he won't be able to be there; he is particularly anxious to vote, doesn't want to arrange a pair, wants his State people to know where he stands. But I'm afraid—I'm afraid— That former attack looks bad. Well, I'm keeping him down now. It's too soon to say as yet."

"We—we never had a case of arthritis at Densmore. What are my instructions, doctor?" I asked, professionally, wondering why he was so conversational.

"Oh—he is to be kept quiet, as I said." His voice began to get indistinct, as though he were in a hurry to get through. "The treatment of gout is antiphlogistic, as you know; we interfere very little with the local disorder. He is to have a careful diet—I have left some medicines; you will find full directions about giving them—Mrs. Oglethorpe has been in charge. And—anything further I can tell you to-morrow." And he rang off.

The Oglethorpes' was one of those small and perfect establishments that make you comfortable the moment you enter. But everything in

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it seemed in temporary eclipse. The man who admitted me, his professional noiselessness made more complete by anxiety to keep the slightest sound from ascending the redwood staircase, had a shade of concern over his ruddy cheerfulness; in the distant vista of the dining-room a maid waxed the mahogany, the starchy rustle of her morning gingham carefully subdued; Mrs. Oglethorpe came down to meet me as quietly as the conjunction of stout lady and silk linings would permit.

The Senator's wife was a somewhat more than middle-aged woman, with the faded fairness and indeterminate features that are so often the unwelcome goal of delicate, blond youth. Her proportions, meekly offered up before the distorting exactions of the prevailing mode, were of a portentousness! But her smile was child-like in its lovely simplicity, and she won me instantly with the charm of her voice.

"Mr. Oglethorpe is not suffering just now," she said, in answer to my inquiry. "But we are all alarmed. He has had two of these attacks before, and the second one came very near his heart." She fluttered her handkerchief nervously, and the tears were near her eyes. But she made an effort to grasp her composure, and succeeded fairly well. "That is why he must

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be kept so quiet—the doctor has insisted on quiet.”

“I suppose he has left directions for a strict diet,” I said.

“Not so very strict.” She smiled indulgently. “Mr. Oglethorpe doesn’t submit very well to a diet. I think he likes Doctor Graham better than the physician who attended him before, on that account. Doctor Graham says he will control the disease largely through the medicines. He has given him several kinds. Doctor Graham certainly is a careful physician, and attentive—very attentive.” There was affectionate gratification in her dear old face. “He told Mr. Oglethorpe that he must avoid heat-producing foods, but he didn’t say what foods were heat-producing—so I give Mr. Oglethorpe very much what he likes.” Again she smiled, her grandmotherly smile.

I opened my mouth to speak; but remembered, and shut it in time. It would have been a dreadful thing if I had expressed an opinion—and one contrary to the doctor’s. And, perhaps, after all, the things the patient liked to eat were not rich, heat-producing things.

“It is hard to have to go out and leave him.” Mrs. Oglethorpe looked distressed again. “But people get vexed at you if you don’t return their

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calls, and one of our State delegation is giving a luncheon to-day. And I am so relieved to have you come. You can amuse him nicely, and my husband likes young girls so much. If my baby—" Her face grew tremulous, but she checked herself. But you knew by the effort that she would have just loved to sit down and hold your hands and have a nice, weepy, comfortable talk. "I told the doctor he must send a young nurse and a pretty one with a nice, fresh color—and you certainly are just what I asked for. You don't mind my saying that, do you, my dear? I am really almost an old lady. Javins will take you to the Senator after the maid has shown you your room." And she sailed out quite gayly, after all.

I had almost a shock when Javins announced me at the Senator's door—the scene was so exactly what any one who had been trained on Thackeray and Trollope would have expected to find where the patient was suffering with the gout. There was a pleasant wood fire in the room, but the Senator's couch was drawn up under the windows, a respectable distance away from it. The warm light flickered over book and picture-lined walls, over a big, convenient, untidy desk, huge leather-covered easy-chairs, over a reading-table that was of delightful design

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and workmanship. The walls were a mosaic of pictures—some of them of the kind of French technical studies that you don't altogether like, but jewel-like where meeting day and firelight brought forth tones that even the painter had not foreseen.

The figure of the sufferer was the right center for such a scene. His dressing-gown was of the shade of deep red that suggests luxury. He was propped up at just the angle to read; at his elbow was a little stand bearing a cigar-box, some books, two glasses, and a decanter. The hand that groped absently in the cigar-box was long and shapely, and the fingers were delicate. It was one of those hands that suggest inevitably lace ruffles. Before Javins spoke he gave a pleased chuckle over the page on which his eyes were fixed, and the hand with the cigar in it gave a suave flourish in echo of what he read.

"Miss Alyson, sir," announced Javins. And, as the man in the dressing-gown looked up with startled inquiry, "The nurse, sir."

The Senator altered his start of surprise to a start of welcome, and the reminiscent smile upon his face changed to a grimace of pain as the slight change of position evidently brought a twinge from the affected foot. He frowned ir-



HE GAVE A PLEASSED CHUCKLE OVER THE PAGE ON WHICH
HIS EYES WERE FIXED



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ritably. But that was not until he had greeted me as gallantly as is permitted to a gentleman who may not move more than his head and hands without danger of deadly things. Then he closed his eyes and sighed fretfully.

"Javins, I wish you would clear away some of these books," he said. "The pain left me for a moment, and I really forgot it. But it's coming back again. I'm afraid you'll have a sad time of it, Miss Alyson." And he opened his eyes to smile at me delightfully.

Senator Oglethorpe was a handsome man. If there were ever any use in having an opinion about the age of a certain type of clear-featured, clean-shaven man, I would have said he looked to be no more than fifty-five. But, unless he was much younger than his wife, he must have been over sixty. His dark hair had just the becoming little dashes of flour-barrel white at the temples that the leading man in an up-to-date play puts on when he has to represent a reverend personage and doesn't want to sacrifice his looks. The Senator's face was attractively florid; the softness of the lines under the deep cleft of his chin suggested to the pessimistic a later flabbiness. But I imagine very few women would have been of the pessimistic—at least when his eyes were upon them. For in those

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eyes, even more than in the other features of his comely face, there lurked a pleasant little laughing devil that neither years, nor statesmanship, nor, apparently, even the gout, had been able to subdue.

I might just as well say right here that I fell in love with him on the spot. I told Mrs. Oglethorpe I had, the next time I saw her, and she laughed until her fat, comfortable features weren't much more than slits.

"Bless you, my child, I'm so used to that that I feel as if something had been left out when it doesn't happen. When I was a young wife all the old ladies used to ask me if I were sure I knew what a treasure I had, and now that I'm an old one the young girls ask me if I know how terribly fascinating he is. The ones in between say nothing, now just as they did then. But I think you'll find," she went on, proudly—and I liked her so much for it—"that no man, young or old, needs to remain silent about him. And that's why we're so honorably and uncomfortably poor."

And what she said must be true, for Mr. Kent has always been enthusiastic about Senator Oglethorpe. And when Mr. Kent admires a man it means something. So this is one reason I felt as I did about things that happened later.

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But now, as Javins swept away the books that were pitched about on the couch and on the stand, the ugly dark cloth cover of one of them caught my eye. It was so different from the charming bindings of the others. It looked like the medical tomes that we had studied in training. And so it was—a medical dictionary. The page at which it was open met my eye. There were the various classes of gout—Arthritis podagra, Arthritis cardiac, and the rest, with the symptoms and methods of treatment.

“How strange!” I thought. “Mr. Oglethorpe looks like too sensible a man to make himself feel worse by reading up about the possible complications of his disease. And the doctor said the Senator was anxious to get well so as to vote on some bill.”

The maid was bringing in his lunch tray. She looked as if she had been made up for the part. No gingham, evidently, for the Senator’s service. Black silk, no less, and the sheerest muslin, and most of our skill expended on cap and apron-strings! A glance at her cheeks showed that the gentleman’s preference in the matter of complexion had been there observed by the dutiful wife. English as were the roses, no Japanese could have made a more careful study of still life than the tray had become under her hands—

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and her effort had the additional advantage of looking edible. The china had the lightest and most restful conventional design in green. The silver service was almost fragile in its delicacy. Beside it lay the palest of pink roses and a spray of fern.

But there fragility ended! Mrs. Ogleshorpe had spoken truly. The Senator had not submitted to a too rigid diet. A dry cocktail showed amber lights in a tall bell-glass of old English cutting; roast duck showed appetizingly brown with a rich and steaming dressing; there was the freshest of green and pink lobster salad with the yellowest of mayonnaise; a miniature coffee-machine bubbled ingratiatingly. And if the decanter on the bed-stand revealed Bourbon, the bottle on the tray proclaimed port.

I looked inquiringly at the patient. I had received no definite instructions from the doctor, but I couldn't help feeling some moral responsibility. The Senator smiled blandly back. He looked exactly as if he were enjoying the situation.

I opened my lips to speak. And closed them. It is sometimes a hard thing to observe professional lines. The Senator twinkled approvingly.

"Self-control is an admirable thing," he ob-

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served, mischievously. "Not that I care for too much of it—in Lovely Woman—"

I wish I could describe the way he said "Lovely Woman." It was exactly as if he had waved a florist's box with dozens of American Beauty roses right before you. But instead of that, he had lifted the cocktail to his lips.

"Too much self-control is suggestive of higher education and Unitarianism and professions for women. It smacks of shirt-waists and straight lines and character, instead of soft draperies and curves and—charm. Won't you cut this duck for me, Miss Alyson?" he begged, plaintively. "It wrenches my bad foot if I try." And as I came around the couch to help him he shrank pronouncedly for fear I might graze the enthroned foot.

The cocktail despatched—"You will pour the coffee?" he asked, in the tone of a man who is never gainsaid. "A woman never looks as charming as when she is gracing some household ceremonial. If I had been a Roman, I should have built my temple to Hebe; as it is, I drink to her—" with a gallant nod as he raised himself on his elbow to tilt the glass of port to his lips. "I suppose I should characterize you as Hygeia—" he spoke with great gravity. "But, personally, I prefer Hebe."

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I suppose it would be impossible to make any one who wasn't there understand that all this was not either grotesque or offensive. I think the reason that it was not was the atmosphere with which the Senator surrounded himself. He might have been any one of the beaux that took the waters at Bath. He might have been Brummel or Sheridan or anything eighteenth-century. It would be worth the while of any one to give a colonial ball for the sake of seeing him in satin coat, powdered peruke, silk stockings, and paste buckles. I fancied even that he tossed his hand as if to throw back an impending fall of lace as he brought the port between his eyes and the light to enjoy the glow of it.

When he poured himself the second glass of port I almost said something again. But I might just as well have shouted, "Hasn't the doctor left directions for a low diet?" for he understood me perfectly. He is one of those men to whom women have liked to tell so many things that he sees through them too well for comfort. And he seemed to get a great deal of entertainment out of my silence.

"I don't enjoy dieting particularly," he said, with a sort of wilfulness that made you want to indulge him all the more. "And so we have interpreted the doctor's rather vague directions

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somewhat liberally. May I ask you to add to the charm of that salad by confiding to me as large a portion as you think my gouty condition will allow?" And while I was dividing it he leaned back and watched me, quoting:

"O woman! in our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

And the air with which he said it made me realize that he really did belong to an older generation.

"You will have to read a great deal of poetry to me," he said, while the salad was still before him. "I used to be very fond of poems in my—youth." He hesitated before the last word, and then attacked it firmly. "I am employing my leisure—forced leisure," he amended, "by renewing acquaintance with old favorites. Are you fond of reading out aloud?" He looked at me with a flattering anxiety. When I had said that I was—"Mrs. Oglethorpe reads delightfully—you have noticed what a lovely voice she has?" He spoke his wife's name with the most delightful old-fashioned flourish. "I always, when she reads to me, think of our own poet's words:

'—And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.'

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Did you ever read those lines, Miss Alyson?"

"I have, Senator Oglethorpe," I assented.

"They are particularly appropriate to my wife. But she is, of course, overwhelmed at this time with her social duties, and can give me little of her day. Now let us have some poetry," he went on, with a lighter air, as one who had paid punctiliously his tribute. And he sat up and bent forward to search for the books he wanted.

"Oh, you mustn't do that," I said, anxiously. I didn't see how the jerk could have failed to be agonizing to the affected foot; I saw it move. But he had a great deal of self-control, for he didn't wince. "You must let me get things for you after this, Senator Oglethorpe. Any sudden exertion might be bad for your heart."

He laughed with great recklessness.

"Oh, you know the gout is freakish, very freakish. You wouldn't believe that I had every one in the house frightened about me this morning—and now I'm not suffering a bit; on my honor, I'm not." He laughed a little more, and then he added, with gravity, "If it will only let up so I can get back to the Senate on the 25th" (this was in February) "in time to kill that confounded Improved Electric item when the District Appropriation bill comes up!" I

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knew this must be the bill Doctor Graham said he was not to be allowed to worry about, so I asked him what he wanted me to read.

"Have you Stephen Phillips here?" I asked. Then I remembered his Longfellow quotation and realized that I must go farther back. "Do you care for Tennyson or Browning?"

"No, no; none of those wild-eyed fellows—and I don't want to be preached at—either in gurgles or gulps. There hasn't been any one since Byron. He doesn't bother you about your soul or your duties or anything unesthetic. You hear music and see beauty and bask in the smiles of Lovely Woman—'lovely woman' that makes me think—what is that thing of Goldsmith's?—'When lovely woman stoops—'" He interrupted himself abruptly. "Ah—suppose we find something else." He took the book from my hand and gave a hurried glance at the page at which I had opened it. "No; hardly the thing"—he turned the sheets quickly—"this, now, is something more suited to you."

Wasn't that dear of him? So many persons seem to think that, because we happen to have nursed surgical cases and know something about medicine, there is nothing in the whole underworld of crime and horror that we are not familiar with. It was lovely to have him realize

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that, after all, I was only a girl, and guard me as carefully as he would have done his own daughter. That was one of the things that made me like him.

So I read a long, rambling thing about how the poet missed his school-friends—what an amount of time people did use to have! And when we finished that we had something, “in numbers warmly pure and sweetly strong,” which the Senator said was considered good taste in poetry. It was by a man who lived in the eighteenth century, named Collins—I remembered having heard of him when I studied the history of literature in Miss Ambleton’s school:

“Thou who with hermit heart
Disdain’st the wealth of art,
And gauds, and pageant weeds, and trailing pall
But com’st, a decent maid
In Attic robe arrayed—”

There the Senator chimed in, waving his shapely right hand in suave emphasis:

“‘O chaste, unboastful Nymph, to thee I call!’”

We were still reciting in concert, the patient beating time, when Javins, with the alacrity that every one in the house displayed in the Senator’s service, brought in the mail.

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"Just put the things that look like invitations in Mrs. Oglethorpe's pile. And the bills, too—then she will pay them out of her allowance." He laughed with a school-boy enjoyment of his own wickedness. "But these personal letters," selecting negligently a number of notes, "and these business things—" And he was deep in the mail for a time.

It was interesting to see him sort the letters; he was so certain what he wanted to read and what he didn't. One letter with the White House crest he read through, every word, although he frowned a good deal over it. One square, business-looking letter with a typewritten address he put hastily away under a cushion as if he wanted it out of his sight. When I went down to get my own lunch he was surrounded by a collection of torn envelopes and scattered sheets.

He had evidently come back to the letter that he had put away, for he was absently reaching for the envelope when I came back into the room again. I was vexed at myself for having let him tire himself; he seemed so flushed and unhappy and uncomfortable when he looked up and saw me.

"I think you have been working long enough." I spoke in as calmly decisive manner as I could.

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You have to exercise a great deal of firmness with a patient that has been spoiled as much as this one had. And I began to gather up the untidy litter.

"I'll keep this one." And the Senator hastily replaced the letter he had in his hand. I couldn't help seeing the words, "Improved Electric," in a clear, business-like hand.

When I left my patient that afternoon I happened to meet Mr. Kent in his runabout. I thought I would rather walk than ride that afternoon, so we left it at the garage to have the battery stored, and had a really brisk spin around Rock Creek Park. He knew about my being at the Oglethorpes', of course, because mother had told him about it when he 'phoned the house to see if I would be home. I thought he would be pleased to know how interested the Senator was in poetry and what nice manners he had—Mr. Kent admired Senator Oglethorpe so much. But Mr. Kent wasn't. He couldn't say anything, of course, but he acted as if, when it was a case of my nursing an interesting man, he didn't like my having joined the toiling masses (that's the exaggerated way I used to talk of nursing when I was a young girl). He was silent for a time and dug his heels into the gravel walk, and I felt vain and comfortable. I wonder why

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it is that the more you believe in having principles the gladder you are when they are not there.

But when I told Mr. Kent how impatient the Senator was to get to the Capitol to vote against the Improved Electric item in the Appropriation bill, he forgot his silly feeling. He brightened up and was enthusiastic.

"He's one of the very best men we have," he said. "Oglethorpe has been in Congress thirty years, and he's a poor man to-day." I didn't say anything, but I might have told him that I didn't believe the Senator was a man who would like being poor very much, and also that I should think it would be expensive being poor on Massachusetts Avenue.

"But you and the doctor will have to get him up by the 25th." He turned and smiled at me. "The vote is close; they say the Improved Electric lobby have all they need but one vote. So if Oglethorpe were not there—and wasn't paired"—he stopped and pulled his hat down emphatically—"why, one more steal would go through, that's all, and a pretty big one, too. You know the I. E. people want to put their typewriter into all the government offices—it would be the biggest kind of a graft. And the Senator's home town would feel it pretty severe-

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ly, for the old Standard is made there, and the government is their chief market."

"That would be dreadful," I said, thinking of Mrs. Oglethorpe and her admiration for the Senator, and the Senator himself, and that letter he seemed so troubled over.

"But from what you say"—Mr. Kent began to walk faster—"and if I know anything of Oglethorpe, he'd vote if he had to be carried there."

"But the doctor says the gout might go to his heart—" I decided I wouldn't say anything about the letter; it might trouble Mr. Kent. "He has been threatened once."

"Who is the doctor?"

"Ellery Graham."

"*Graham!*" He looked at me blankly, and then he whistled. "Well, if it isn't the—most—humorous thing how information gets round!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I just heard to-day—in a casual sort of way—that several of the physicians here had made a nice little pool to buy a block of I. E. stock—and that Graham was the largest holder—"

"Oh—you don't suppose he would—I don't like Doctor Graham. But, oh, surely, you don't think he would try to make the Senator think he would have to stay home—?"

We looked at each other in an "Oh!—hist!"

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manner, and then Mr. Kent shook his shoulders. And we realized we were imagining things we hadn't any business to.

We just walked after that, and went through the Zoo, and fed the bears when the guards weren't looking. And one time Mr. Kent had to cram cakes and peanuts into his pocket in a hurry so we wouldn't get caught.

We did have the best times together—just chummy times. We had passed the first stage of our acquaintance when you are constrained and self-conscious and can't help wondering what is going to come out of it because the person—just because he's new, of course—makes you think about him so much. Mr. Kent and I had had time to realize that we were going to be good friends. I think it is quite a mark of distinction to be able to have a real friendship with a man—Mr. Kent says it requires very rare personalities. So I didn't have the least feeling about going about with him a good deal when I wasn't on a case. And the family didn't find as much fault with him as they usually do about my friends. Ned said once he was a long sight ahead of the sort I usually drew. Which was fulsome praise for him. And father said that, even if Kent did carry more theories about with him than he could swing, he was, at least, consistent. He could

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have had the Washington end of most of the big Customs cases tried if he hadn't been so scrupulous he turned half of them down. Of course, Ned had to spoil it by saying that, if Kent hadn't had a nice little wad left him he wouldn't be able to sport as a philanthropist. But Ned always takes that point of view, so I never consider him much.

When I got back I found that the doctor had made his visit during my absence, and I *was* annoyed. I called him up to find out what to do about the Senator's diet. I had to be politic, of course, and not imply that I considered that he hadn't been careful enough, but just put what meaning I could into the way I asked the questions. But I could not get one definite thing from him. The moment that he seemed to be telling me what the Senator could eat and what he could not his voice would get indistinct. And at last some one seemed to have called him, for he said, quite distinctly:

"I believe you understand everything now, Miss Alyson," and rang off. And he hadn't told me one thing, except that we were to have a careful diet and avoid heat-producing food. While I distinctly asked him if the patient ought to have duck, and lobster salad, and cocktails, and whiskey straight, and port.

At that very moment Javins was bringing in

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the soup for the Senator's dinner, one of those rich, highly seasoned compounds that all self-respecting cooks love to get up. It was before the patient when I returned. And that was followed by baked fish, a steak two inches thick, a nut-and-cheese salad, and other things. I thought I would make the most of Doctor Graham's directions.

"Senator, the doctor expressly said you were to have a careful diet—"

He looked up with an expression of virtuous calm.

"But this is most carefully chosen—I had the cook in and told her myself what I wanted. And she knows she has to do her best for me—"

"But the doctor said you were to avoid heating foods—"

"I'm not conscious that these are heating—I was never cooler. Moreover, Doctor Graham said that I could have broths and fish and an occasional piece of steak—"

"But surely not all at once—and I shall have to find out just what he means by 'occasional.'"

"I assure you, this steak is not only 'occasional'—it is exceptional." And you never saw a truant school-boy going fishing look happier than Senator Oglethorpe did when he cut into that large and juicy porterhouse.

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Now what could any one do? I might have looked disapproving—I tried it. But, really, if you have any sense of humor, you can't look disapproving very long when your patient is forty years older than you are and a leader in his country's councils. Besides that, all he had to do was to look dignified and abstracted for a few minutes to make me feel that I was the truant—and that the fish had slipped the hook. But it all made me certain that Doctor Graham was trying to keep the poor Senator sick and at home so he couldn't kill that bill. And I began to wonder if there wasn't something I could do to save the Senator's honor and save Mr. Kent from being disappointed. As I said before, I never liked Doctor Graham.

The next morning I did something that would have got me into a great deal of trouble if it had been known, for nothing is so bad for a nurse as to get the reputation of interfering with the physician's special province. It is unprofessional. But I couldn't help it.

I told Mrs. Oglethorpe that I wasn't satisfied with the Senator's progress—that I didn't believe Doctor Graham understood the case; and, if there was as much danger as he said there was, the very worst thing was to allow the patient to eat the things that he was having. I said I

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had tried to get some instructions from Doctor Graham and had failed. And I showed her the place in the Medical Dictionary where it said that the treatment was antiphlogistic and explained what that meant.

"Don't you think he is getting better?" She turned white and sat down as if all the strength had gone from her.

"I believe that he will get better if he has the proper treatment," I said, diplomatically.

"It will almost kill him if he is not out by the 25th." She looked at me helplessly. "His vote is needed to prevent a great wrong to our neighbors at home—and Senator Oglethorpe has never yet failed in a trust." The honest pride in her heart went far to drive away her fears. "I will call up Doctor Graham." And she walked away more briskly than one would have expected.

It was but a minute before she was back. "Doctor Graham has gone away for two days," she said, indignantly. "And without leaving any instructions about the Senator's case!"

My heart was beating *hard*. It did seem as if it were *meant* that I should interfere.

"Is there any one you could suggest?" she asked, desperately.

"Doctor Dietrich is a fine physician," I re-

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plied. "He is not as popular as Doctor Graham. But I have nursed for him and like him—"

Before I had had time to finish the sentence she was 'phoning to Doctor Graham's office that she had decided on a change of treatment in the Senator's case. Then, still in great excitement, she sent for Doctor Dietrich.

I think we were both afraid to tell the Senator about Doctor Dietrich; but he took it very quietly. He looked at me pretty sharply and then at his wife. And the hard look that had come into his face softened when he saw her reddened eyes.

But when Doctor Dietrich was announced, Senator Oglethorpe's eyes were bright and combative. I was afraid he might refuse to see the doctor, but he looked as if he rather enjoyed the idea of an encounter. The doctor asked a few questions, and then told me to remove the bandages so he could examine the affected foot.

"Don't touch it!" commanded the patient, drawing it away. "I can't bear having it touched. I won't have it touched!"

"How can I tell anything about the case, then?" asked Doctor Dietrich, bluntly.

"Sorry to deny you the pleasure, doctor"—the Senator spoke with an odd mixture of

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courtesy and mischief—"but I really can't have it unwrapped."

There was silence for a moment as the two men looked at each other.

"Mrs. Oglethorpe wishes to have the patient's heart examined," I put in. "She asked me to speak to you about it. The Senator's heart was threatened in an attack he had two years ago. They both are anxious that he should be able to go out on the 25th. But she wishes you to assure yourself that there is no danger before the Senator should be allowed to move. Doctor Graham—"

"Has Graham had the case?" the doctor asked, quickly. "Why—?"

"Mrs. Oglethorpe wished to try a change of treatment. The patient did not seem to be improving."

"May I examine your heart, Senator?" asked Doctor Dietrich, with his most wooden expression. "Or are you afraid to have me touch that?"

The Senator scrutinized him closely. But he waved a gracious permission.

"I find no indication of trouble here," announced the doctor, after a minute's tapping and sounding. "I think I can relieve your mind about getting out. Evidently the trouble is stationary in the foot—"

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"There is sometimes an uneasy sensation as though it were progressing," said the Senator.

"I think we can control the disorder," the doctor proceeded, undisturbed. "I will leave a dietary with the nurse"—the Senator groaned—"and you can have these prescriptions filled."

"I sincerely hope you may be able to control it—but I remember so well the other attack. Necessary as it is that I should be out, if there is a risk—"

This time the doctor turned and scrutinized the Senator.

"You don't look like a man who would be nervous about his condition," he said, brusquely. "However, I can only leave directions which, if you follow them, will be good for you—in general—" with a glance at the Senator's florid face. "As for the diagnosis—" He paused and a slight smile came to his lips.

The Senator lay looking at him, the lines of his large frame in relief against the couch, his flushed, handsome face and bright eyes, the delicate hands, the suggestion of race, in contrast to the square serviceable form of Doctor Dietrich and his bluff, blunt features. They exchanged glances, with no courteous reserve, but with no antagonism. It was man pitted against man, humorous, discerning, unembarrassed.

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"I should diagnose the case—always admitting that I have not had the opportunity of verifying my opinion by an examination of the affected foot—as *Arthritis senatoria*, sometimes known as *Arthritis officia*—"

The Senator laughed outright.

"*Arthritis senatoria*—senatorial gout—official gout.'" I thought. "Then Doctor Dietrich believes that the Senator really has nothing the matter with him—that he is shamming—oh, how can he?—that must have been what I was afraid of. Then that would mean that he is to profit by the Improved Electric *steal*—at the expense of his home town—after all these honorable years! Oh, *poor* Mrs. Ogleshorpe! And Mr. Kent—"

Doctor Dietrich, smiling tolerantly, was preparing to leave. Those things distress men so little. He himself preferred the clean and upright course—any one could see that; but he was not going to waste any emotion over a man who preferred the contrary. He could even laugh heartily over the Senator's parting jest.

"It was the fear of poverty," I thought. "That was it. It must have ground into his soul. *How* it must have ground for him to be tempted— But I can't believe it is so—"

"Doctor Dietrich," I burst out, desperately, "Senator Ogleshorpe is anxious to be out on the

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25th. He told me he was!" Then I realized that I was looking at him defiantly, and that they would both think I was interfering. And I stammered something about "directions" and couldn't go on. But Doctor Dietrich looked at me so kindly—I certainly was beginning to like Doctor Dietrich—that I felt as if he had patted me on the shoulder. On the threshold he paused to say:

"If there should be any alarming developments, you may call me up. Otherwise I think you will not require my services further."

I had the most dreadful sensation of being left alone with something that was too big for me when he closed the door. I looked at the Senator. He had taken a book and had his eyes upon it. But his face was a dark and painful red.

When I went to my room that evening I sat down by the table a long time and thought. It was certainly a difficult situation. Doctor Graham might be right or Doctor Dietrich. The Senator might have the gout—certainly he had had an attack two years back, and he couldn't have begun to plan for the I. E. then—or he might not. In any case I had to act as if he did have it. But there was Mrs. Oglethorpe's trust in him! There was the Senator's long and

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honorable public career! There was what Mr. Kent thought of him!

I got out the record sheet that I had begun to keep. It certainly did seem foolish to go on taking temperature and all that when neither doctor was in the least interested in it. But as I looked absently at the words "Medicine," "Food," "Stimulants," "Remarks," a regular plan of action came to me. I rang for Emily.

"Please go to the Senator's study and get these books if he is through with them." And I gave her a list. While she was away I copied down Doctor Dietrich's dietary, and had satisfaction in putting down under "Stimulants," "Nothing alcoholic." Then I made notes and went to bed.

The next day was the 17th. The Senator was taciturn and extremely dignified. There was no difficulty over his breakfast tray. I made it look as attractive as I could—and then, he didn't seem hungry. The first collision came later, when he told Javins to fill his decanter.

"The doctor left directions that you were to have nothing alcoholic, Senator Ogleshorpe," I said, after Javins had left the room.

"Oh, doctors always say that," he replied, easily.

"But I will have to obey his directions."

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"But I said you were Hebe, not Hygeia," he coaxed, in a careless, assured sort of way.

I knew that was the time to settle it. "This is the dietary the doctor left"—I read the list. "And you notice that he expressly says, 'Nothing alcoholic.' As long as I am nursing the case under him I am bound to follow his directions. Of course, if you wish to call in another physician and he changes my orders, or if you are well enough to dismiss the nurse, there will be no necessity of my interfering."

I had managed my voice beautifully. Although the Senator was looking at me from under lowering brows, it was steady. But the wretched paper in my hands shook. And that let him know how frightened I really was.

The frown vanished, and the tenderest, most fatherly, softness came into his eyes. But when he spoke, it was lightly, with the gracious wave of his hand.

"Fair jailer, I yield, I yield."

On the 18th I went to work to get a different sort of atmosphere into the study. Maybe that was fanciful, but I do think those things count. As it was, it would make any one think how indispensable was money. I asked the Senator if he would object if I made some changes, and he said he wouldn't, and seemed rather re-

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lieved that my energies were bent in that direction.

So I had ever so much fun. It was like setting the stage for theatricals. I put away the pictures I didn't like, and some of the bronzes with twisty drapery. Then I put Byron back on the shelves with some of the other books. In a little while, with the restful green of the walls showing here and there, the decanter and glasses out of the way, and half of the artistic litter removed, the room began to look quiet and hygienic. I couldn't take down the hangings; but I pushed them back as far as I could, and, after I had covered up the patient, let in the air. All that day the Senator was quiet, and lay watching me, with an amused, puzzled line between his bright eyes.

The 19th wasn't so good a day. In the morning's mail another letter came from the I. E. people—I knew it because it looked just like the other. The Senator was gloomy all day long; didn't want me to read to him; said his foot was troubling him more; bit his lips when he looked at his lunch tray. The I. E. letter had made me feel that he ought to have an especially low diet; and, when I got it to him, I realized that the broth was perhaps unnecessarily thin, and one does get tired of properly cooked eggs—and these were coddled.

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The 20th was mild, with a flavor of spring in the air. I opened the windows wide so the breeze could puff the curtains enticingly, put a big bowl of jonquils in a Gruby jar where the sun would strike it and the Senator's eyes must rest upon it, and sat down to read. After several of the poems about "lovely woman," I turned to one of Gray's:

"How the golden morn aloft
Waves her dew-bespangled wing—"

What I really meant for him was the last verse:

"See the wretch that long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length repair his vigor lost
And breathe and walk again;
The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening Paradise."

After I had finished he deliberately turned his head and looked at me piercingly. I don't know what he found out—it couldn't have been anything unkind, for I didn't feel it. When he had finished he lay staring out of the window to where, through gaps in the houses, he could see the purple treetops hiding Rock Creek. His face was non-committal—as he could make it when he would. When he did speak, it was in

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a tone of bitter reverie, and more to himself than to me:

"And what if the 'thorny bed' be not of 'pain,' but of age? What if each day does not 'repair his vigor lost,' but steals from it? What then, little nurse? Have you poems and incantations, charms and believing looks, to cure your patient of—that—the paralysis and the—chill?"

It was dreadfully sad to hear him talk that way. But there didn't seem to be anything that it wouldn't be impertinent to say. So I just put the cigar-box where he could reach it and pleased him by lighting a cigar. Then I went down and saw the cook, and brought him a supper that was more nearly what he liked. And I poured him out a glass of port—there are times when you have to adapt orders to the case in hand. And he forgot all about age, and called me Hebe, and waved his hand at me, and quoted Byron. So the day ended pleasantly, after all.

There isn't much to say about the 21st. He was silent and gloomy and locked up in himself all day.

On the 22d I began to feel panicky. So I did several things all together. First I got him to talking about famous Kentucky belles that I had heard my mother tell about. He said that

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he had never admired thin women or very clever ones.

"Nature intended woman to be soft and rounded and loving," he said. And he had a way of saying "woman" that was a poem in itself, while his beautiful hands described wavering, graceful curves. At last he got out a miniature of his wife as she was when he met her. He always carried it, he said. The picture really was of the loveliest, most fragile, dewy sort of a girl. I didn't blame Senator Oglethorpe for looking dreamy and sentimental when he looked at it. It was rather unfortunate that Mrs. Oglethorpe rustled in just after he had put the picture away. She was going out to dinner, and the new kind of figure made her look bigger than ever in an evening gown. The Senator closed his eyes in a tired sort of way, and lay with them shut all the time she was in the room. That wasn't the way I wanted things to go, so I found one of the poems I had selected and made her read it. Her lovely voice made me cry as she read:

"And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!"

The Senator caught her hand and lay with it against his cheek. After she had gone I got in

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a few really subtle remarks about how much she admired the Senator, and how she had said to me, "No man needs to remain silent about him." I don't know now how I ever could have done it—it seems so presuming. But when you have to tuck a napkin about your patient's neck nobody seems awe-inspiring; and I never knew what he thought, for he kept his eyes shut, and his forehead was contracted in a frown between them. On the whole, I felt that it had been a successful day.

I kept the most important poem to read on the 23d. It was by Pope, and began:

"Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres abound."

It was all about living in the country on your own flocks and herds and garden. It did seem incongruous when you thought of Senator Oglethorpe; but simplicity was the idea I wanted to convey. It made him laugh outright at first. Then he lay silent for a time, his face a mask. Suddenly he turned on me fiercely.

"Do you know anything about poverty?" he demanded.

That was a queer question to ask, since—I was there nursing him. He must have noticed that I flushed, for he looked distressed.

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"Oh, I beg your pardon—you see, you seem to me so rich." Then he raised himself on his elbow and shook his hand at me with a terrible energy. "And it's true. You are rich. Youth knows nothing of poverty—or the fear of it. It is age that knows its face, age with its sudden terrors, its languor, its loneliness, its deadly chill!"

My heart was pounding. My face was burning. There was nothing that I could read that would answer *that*. But I did so want him to do the right thing! My voice was very shaky—but I couldn't help speaking, either.

"And it's because age sees these things and dares to do right in spite of them that we—that youth—looks up, and is helped—"

I went right out of the room without looking at him, so I don't know what he thought.

The next day, the 24th, I was completely discouraged. He was in just the sort of mood that he was in the day I came. He said he didn't know when he could get up. He said his foot was worse. He rebelled against the diet, and sent directions to the cook through Javins for a *terrible* dinner. He read Byron and chuckled to himself. He teased me. He wouldn't have Mrs. Oglethorpe read to him. He kissed her hand gallantly when she came in to see him, but

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wouldn't look at her. He had a cocktail before his dinner and port with it. He lay in the center of a cloud of tobacco smoke and laughed at everything. I went to bed tired out.

The next morning, when I came down-stairs to give the patient his breakfast, he had not yet been brought into the study. Through the open door I caught sight of Javins laying out clothes. From the dressing-room came the greatest sound of splashing that ever was heard. Then came a thump, thump against the wall that must have been chest-weights or a punching-bag. After a very long time the Senator came into the room where I was.

He was walking! And he frightened me. I hadn't realized how tall he was, and he had chosen to wear a frock coat that made him look like the older statesmen whose portraits we have about the public buildings. The flesh had dropped away from his frame in the last week, and the high color had faded from his face. The long lines of his body, the severe strength of his face, the dauntless poise of the head, the slender, sinewy hands, made me think of one of the old Indian-fighters that were his ancestors in days when men had to hunt and fight to live in Kentucky. He was so busy that he had time only to tell me casually, over his shoulder, while

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he waited for Central to get some one for him on the 'phone, that his foot was much better, and that he was going to the Senate.

When I came down in my street clothes I looked for my patient to say good-by. He had not yet gone, but was just gathering up some papers on his desk, an absorbed frown on his face. I had on a new hat I had bought the afternoon before—I didn't really need one, but the midwinter sales are too tempting, and the wings were set at a good angle, and the colors suited me. I felt happy, too, with the Senator going to the Capitol to vote, after all, and realizing that Mr. Kent wouldn't have to be disappointed in him. Then, too, I had said that I couldn't go to the opera, and I could.

The Senator raised his eyes from the papers, and the straight lines about his mouth relaxed.

"'Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm,'" he quoted, softly. Then he rose and took my hand in his.

"Good-by, little nurse," he said, and his hand held mine as if he had forgotten it.

And I never have forgotten what was in his face—although I could not make any one else understand. There was a fire in his eyes, as if he had not left off being a lover and never would; there was something wistful and remembering

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that made me want to cry; there was even a little amusement, it seemed to me; there was the expression that he would have worn had his own little daughter lived—I knew it, for I had seen it in my own father—but here it was thwarted, longing. But, more than all else, there was a hurt, lonely dignity, the aloofness of age, as if I, a child, had dared to judge him who was on the brink of strange and solemn things. My eyes fell before his and my face burned.

The next instant he had raised my hand to his lips and was saying, with gay lightness, and with his funny air of having discovered the lines:

“O woman! in our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A Ministering Angel Thou.”

And he put the most indescribable emphasis on “Ministering Angel.”

That’s why I never have known whether I really did do anything with my first case or not. For he may really have had arthritis and got well in time. Or it may have been due to Mrs. Oglethorpe or Doctor Dietrich that he decided to kill the Improved Electric item—for it was killed—Mr. Kent told me it was, at the opera that evening. Or it may have been the diet, or the medicine, or the fresh air, or the

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eighteenth-century poets. But, anyway, I am glad he did it.

I told Mr. Kent all about it on the way to the "Valkyrie" that evening. He didn't know what to think any more than I did. You see, he was in a difficult position. Senator Oglethorpe had been one of his heroes—he is very much concerned about the wave of dishonesty that is sweeping over the country and he had got into the habit of thinking about Senator Oglethorpe: "Now *there* is a man who can't be bought." So, of course, it was a shock to think he wasn't invulnerable. Mr. Kent is so loyal. On the other hand, he seemed to think that, if the Senator was on the verge of a dishonest deal, I was just the one to influence him against it. I don't see where he got any such idea of me, for he hardly knew me; and even if we had known each other ever so long, I was so overwhelmed, somehow, when I was with him, that I never could say anything or do anything but just be dull and stupid and listen to the perfectly splendid things he said. But he seemed to have formed a very definite idea of me, according to what he said that evening.

Somehow, most of what I remember of that evening is the Fire Music and the way Mr. Kent looked when he said things and the very queer

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way the music made me feel. I don't remember much about what they did on the stage. I never know whether I really care for music or not. I certainly never seem to understand other people when they are talking about it. But it does things to me. And all through that music I seemed to hear the world aspiring— aspiring— aspiring—and longing—and yet, somehow, gloriously sure what it longed for would come. Even when it was saddest the music knew that—oh yes, I was very sure of it—the something glorious—that made your heart beat suffocatingly and the blood pound at your ears and your eyes fill with tears—would come. Over and over again, when it was almost fainting for fear it wouldn't, the world knew it would come—and, somehow, Mr. Kent and I were mixed up with it. When you are listening to music like that with any one you like he always is mixed up in it. I had often noticed that before, but never so much as the "Valkyrie" evening. And Mr. Kent must have felt that, too. For when my hand went out—it must have, though I didn't realize it—I suppose I was just part of the something that was reaching out at that moment and moved involuntarily—I found my hand in his. That waked me up and I stammered something, and he recollected that what he had meant to do was to give me the

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opera-glasses. But before I had time to wake up I remember feeling that the music and being with somebody I liked and the instant's grasp of that wonderful warm hand was all sweet together—achingly sweet.

We talked about Senator Oglethorpe again, going home. I don't remember that we talked much about the music or the play. After he had said good-night Mr. Kent waited just a moment. And he said:

"Well, anyway, whether you 'did anything' to Senator Oglethorpe or not, Miss Alyson, you did something to me this evening."

"What?" I asked—of course you always want to know things. And, if you're a woman, you usually think it's going to be something so much more than it usually turns out. I don't know just what I expected Mr. Kent was going to tell me. But what he said was:

"You have made me see something in yourself," he said, hesitatingly. I never have believed that that was really all he wanted to say.

"What?" I asked again—any girl would, you know.

By this time he was quite ordinary again.

"Well, to be strictly up to date, we'll say—your 'temperament.'" He laughed, quite lightly. "I suppose it would be—almost of the cen-

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tury Senator Oglethorpe loves so much, to say. your 'soul.'" His voice sounded as if he were laughing a little at us both.

And that's all there was about that evening—
except that he said good-night again and then he said:

"Good-night, Nancy."

That was the first time he ever used my name. It's a silly sort of a name, and more pert than anything else. But, somehow, the way he said it was as descriptive as when Senator Oglethorpe said, "Lovely woman." And it was a whole lot nicer.

III

THE ENEMY

THERE is one thing I have noticed, and that is, that no important friendship ever grows in any properly regular manner. The little ones do—if they grow at all—that's the curious part of it. Some people you know right at the beginning. You say: "I like them," or: "I don't like them"—that is, if you take the trouble to think very much about it. But the big friendships, that make you feel as if something thrilling were going to be revealed the next time, always disappoint you "next time." It all falls flat.

That's the way it was with Mr. Kent. I didn't take a case for a month or so after Senator Oglethorpe's—my mother thought that I was tired and that I needed to rest. Of course, I thought I would probably see a great deal of Mr. Kent, and that several points that I hadn't altogether analyzed in his character and way of looking at things would be made perfectly clear.

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As a matter of fact, I did see him a good many times. But, somehow, he wasn't as interesting as I had thought he was going to be. Or maybe I was stupid myself and he didn't find me as interesting. I had the conviction all the time that I was boring him; and you know nothing quenches your language like that. The first time he called after the "Valkyrie" I could almost have cried; I was so disappointed in him—or in myself. It had seemed the night of the opera as if everything were going to be tingling and inspiring all the rest of the time. Perhaps it was the music that put tones into people's voices and expressions into their faces that weren't really there. Of course, one can't have the Fire Music playing as a sort of background every time you entertain a caller in the reception-room, with all the family in the next room able to hear every word you say. If you could, maybe you would forget to be stiff and be able to say the things you thought you were going to say before he came. So one day when mother told me Doctor Dietrich had telephoned me to take a case for him I was very glad. I liked Doctor Dietrich. He was so experienced and sure of himself and untheoretical and older. Then I was getting eager to go to work again. Work takes you out of yourself so. * * *

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I followed the doctor into the reception-room and closed the door behind me.

"Doctor Dietrich, who is to take the responsibility in this case?"

"You and I."

I gasped.

"I'm afraid it's rather a high-handed performance on my part"—I was surprised to see what a boyish smile he had—"but there was no time to be lost. I found when I got a square look at her last night—I forgot to tell you that she came to my office at eleven—alone—begging for a morphine hypodermic—with one of the usual stories, of course—that I had seen her before. I know her husband, Lieutenant Campbell, a fine fellow—"

"You didn't give it to her!"

"Oh yes, I gave her a hypodermic—of water—coward, of course—didn't want a scene. But she was too habituated to be put off that way, so I had my scene, after all." He shrugged his shoulders so as to make himself look brutal. But I was beginning to know Doctor Dietrich too well to be deceived by his brusque mannerisms.

"And then?" I prompted him.

"Oh—I talked with her while I was getting her home—got hold of her a little. It won't last, you know; maybe it didn't ten minutes after I

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left her. But I just put the thing to her—played she was a reasoning human being for a few minutes. You know, just what any one would have done.” He almost stammered in his haste to get himself out of the conversation.

“You needn’t be afraid of me, Doctor Dietrich,” I laughed. “Honestly, I am not going to praise you. You have convinced me. I know it is less than nothing to get hold of a morphine victim when she is frantic for the drug, send her away without it, and get her to consent to undergo treatment. Having settled this point, I must say that I don’t like to nurse Mrs. Campbell without consulting some of her relatives.”

“But she hasn’t any people that can be counted on,” he said, irritably. “Campbell cruising around the Pacific somewhere—doesn’t know anything about the morphine, she says. Nothing but a stepmother on Campbell’s side and a brother on hers. And he’s out on the Pacific coast somewhere. She’s in Washington only because Campbell’s last station was Annapolis; they know only a few of the navy people here, and those only slightly. Some one had to take hold.”

I felt as if a two-hundred-pound weight had settled down on my shoulders. But it would

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never occur to you to refuse a case if Doctor Dietrich wanted you to take it.

"But," I said, in depression, "I'm afraid she wasn't sincere in her desire to reform—"

"'Reform'!" he interrupted me, laughing. "Dear me, how moral you are! You surely wouldn't expect her to stay in the same mind all this time. That's one of the features of the disease."

I felt as if he were taking me too much for granted. And that made me want to say something unpleasant.

"I think it very probable," I remarked, stiffly, "that she put herself under your charge in order to get the morphine you would allow her in addition to what she had managed to hide. Sometime between the hour when you left her and ten this morning when I arrived she must have bought a quantity of the powder—"

"Oh, yes, there are always druggists that pander to anything with a profit—'my poverty and not my will consents'—that sort of thing. Did you discover where she put it?"

"Yes; in the brass knobs of one of the bedsteads."

"Clever hiding-place," nodded the doctor, approvingly. "She probably has another; they usually count on discovery. You'll watch her

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closely, of course. If she has another store, she won't stay long from her base of supplies"—he was looking absent-mindedly for his gloves.

"But, doctor! What am I to do if she won't try to do better? It's dreadful to think any one is trying to deceive you all the time."

Doctor Dietrich looked me over in his dispassionate way.

"You're a good deal of a little girl, after all, aren't you?" he demanded. Then his face grew stern. "Now, see here, I will not have Mrs. Campbell treated as if she were a criminal. This cunning, this apparent destruction of the moral nature, is as much a feature of the disease as the contraction of the pupil of the eye. As for the beginning of these things—that's all beyond you or me. I think it very probable that, under the same circumstances, I'd be five times worse than she is. Enough physicians are," he threw in, grimly. "I asked you to take the case because I thought that, even though you are a nurse, you might manage to be a little human—and then, there was the question of class. If you nurse Mrs. Campbell—are you going to do it?"

"Yes," I replied, meekly.

"Well, then, you can't sleep or breathe without the load of this woman's sick body on your

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conscience. You've got to realize that it's your *conscience* and her *body*—you mustn't dare to judge her. You've got to be nurse and keeper and entertainer and sister. And you've even got to take it on trust that she is worth saving. For you didn't see her as she was when she married Campbell. Poor little bride!" he turned away to say under his breath.

I felt ashamed of myself.

"I'm sorry," I said, in the silliest way. "And I won't judge her. Honestly, I won't."

His face cleared.

"That's better," he said, briskly. "Now—just now, the only thing you can do is to try to find out how much she has been in the habit of taking during the twenty-four hours; of course, you can't trust what she says—probably she doesn't know. Get her down to five grains at two fixed hours as soon as you can. Wish I knew who prescribed morphine for her in the first place—it was for some slight neuralgic trouble, I believe. But I suppose I have no business to know. There are enough of us who never think beyond 'relieving' the immediate pain," he added, sadly.

He took up his hat.

"If you could contrive to feel some real fondness for her," he said, his hand on the knob of

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the hall door, "that would be the best thing yet—"

"Oh, Doctor Dietrich!" said a sweet, husky voice from the head of the stairs. "Vulnerable, after all?"

We both turned and looked where Mrs. Campbell stood, one nervous, delicate hand on the balustrade. Her brown eyes gazed deliberately from the doctor to me. Their brilliant gaze would have been arch had they not been suffused with a restful languor. When I had seen her the moment before, she had been tense and restlessly irritable.

"Vulnerable—oh yes," assented the doctor, absently. Then, as he telegraphed, "She has had it!" to me, he straightened himself and said gallantly, "But where weapons are irresistible, what man is not?" with a magnificent sweep of his hat, which served the double purpose of announcing his departure and conveying another warning to me.

Mrs. Campbell laughed, a low, infinitely contented laugh.

"Funny, square man, Doctor Dietrich is, isn't he?" she said, lightly. "And so clever, so terrifyingly clever!" She darted a side glance at me, full of the playful cunning of a child, and the first thing I knew I was laughing with her.

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That seemed to clear the atmosphere—she had bit her lip when I first appeared in my nurse's uniform. But now she gave me a soft, caressing pat on the hand.

"What shall we do with ourselves this April day?" she asked. "I think I want something different."

"The country?" I suggested.

"Yes, that's it. I want to see the spring beauties and anemones. I'd like to be where they are when—when I usually take—it. I know it will be better for me!" She was on fire with enthusiasm. "Come!" She turned her head as she preceded me up the stairs to say, "I wasn't very nice to you when you came, but I think it is very good of you to stay with me and help me get well." There was something appealing in the confident little smile she threw me.

"How would it do to take a house in the country for these weeks?" I began, knowing that it was a good plan to break up associations connected with the drug.

Her face fell.

"Oh no, I couldn't—it wouldn't do—Lex wouldn't like it not to find me here when he returns. I—like this house!" She was trembling with fear and excitement, and it took some moments to reassure her.

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I delayed only long enough in my room to pick up my hat before I followed her into her own exquisitely fresh and simple bedroom. It's a humiliating thing to have to act as keeper; but Mrs. Campbell gave no sign of resentment. She was changing her house gown for a tailored white linen walking-dress—in which there was less difference to be observed from my uniform. And both were suitable enough for the warm day. She looked so slender and girlish as she stood, with arms upraised, pinning on her hat, that compassion filled me. Whether or not she saw something of it as my eyes met hers in the mirror I don't know. But she lifted her chin proudly and said to my reflection:

"Of course, you understand I require assistance only for the baths and massage and things like that while I reduce the amount of morphine I have been forced to take." She turned around and faced me. "I have quite enough will-power to drop it any moment I choose," she said, haughtily.

My heart sank. It would be so much more difficult to deal with her in that mood. She so needed to realize her danger. And I thought the doctor had convinced her the night before.

For the first half-hour of our walk Mrs. Campbell's enthusiasm hurried her forward at a pace

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I found it difficult to equal. As soon as her interest slackened and she began to drag I hailed a car, which took us within a short distance of Piney Branch and spring flowers. There for a time she was happy. She darted here and there, by the side of the road, half-way across a field, greeting with joyous and caressing cries each new patch of purple pansy-violets, or delicate bloodroot. But in the midst of pursuit interest left her as freakishly as it had been evoked. She dropped the already faded flowers and stood locking and unlocking her emptied hands, eyes turned broodingly toward the city we had left.

"Mrs. Campbell," I said, thinking that this might be the time to find out the quantity of the drug she had been accustomed to use, "do you feel that you must have a hypodermic? What have you been accustomed to take? And at what intervals? I have brought the medicine with me."

Her lips parted eagerly and she turned feverish eyes to me. The next moment the instinct of secrecy prevailed.

"No, no. I shall get along very nicely until this evening. Then—just a grain or so—to make me sleep. But only if the neuralgia troubles me. You mustn't think I am addicted to it." She spoke with a fine air of candor and a gracious smile.

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But, with the words, the spirit of restlessness seized her, and she was as eager to get back home as she had been to leave it. In spite of hurry and the help of a passing taxicab she was exhausted before we reached shelter. When I had made her comfortable in bed she still protested that she did not want the morphine. So I went for a glass of milk to bridge over the hour before dinner-time, but found that she had fallen asleep. I listened to her quiet breathing for a few minutes, covered her up, and left her, delighted that she was having natural slumber. It all looked encouraging.

I utilized the unexpected freedom by making a systematic search for possible hiding-places for morphine. Mrs. Campbell's was one of the usual small houses on the outskirts of a fashionable quarter that represent the eternal compromise between the purses and the position of the navy. Both the maids denied having ever bought the drug for Mrs. Campbell, and, when I had explained the circumstances, promised that they never would. The elder woman followed me into the butler's pantry.

"Indade, I wudn't do annything to hurt Mrs. Campbell for the wurruld," she said, with a sudden softness in her hard face. "And I'm glad some one has come to take care of her, poor

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little lady. She's been that kind to me, nobody knows, takin' me and my boy in whin nobody else wud!"

The house was full of photographs of a naval officer in all sorts of settings, some of them Eastern enough. Mr. Campbell must have been a vain personage—or else he must have been responding to constant demands from home. I concluded, after a glance or so at the straightforward face, that the second was the explanation.

This had all taken but a short time; and yet, when I heard a slight noise from Mrs. Campbell's room and ran to her, she must have been up for many minutes, for the room was in the most amazing confusion. Sitting in the midst of a heap of scattered things, she explained casually that she had been hunting for "one of Lex's old letters."

I think I have never seen a being more pitifully changed by the ravages of a sorry half-hour than Mrs. Campbell had become during the time she had been left alone. The pupils of her eyes, contracted to mere points, were uncanny in the faded brown of the iris; "witch-eyed"—the old phrase occurred to me. The skin, whose pallor was a compound of blue-white and yellow-white and gray—all blanched and

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unwholesome tones—the haunted pallor that is the visible blight of morphine—stretched taut over an expressionless face, stranger still because of the disorder of hanging locks of dark hair, of stained and creased *négligée* and linen. She had evidently started to write, for letters were heaped upon the desk and ink smeared fingers and hanging sleeves. One disfiguring blotch was brushed across her cheek. How the dainty room could have harbored as much grime as made unrecognizable her graceful beauty and its once fresh and exquisite setting, and what quest had matched the disorder of tumbled possessions with the disorder of a wandering will, I could only guess. But it was all so tragically pitiful that for the moment I could only ache with sympathy.

Where she had obtained the morphine, whether it had been brought to her or concealed, I could only surmise—until I caught a glimpse of a skirt with hem half ripped tossed carelessly upon the floor of a closet. A small heap of tablets and a needle were lying quite openly on the desk by the side of the letters. I remembered that I had heard of a hospital patient having carried the drug with her in the hem of a dressing-gown. But a more important question pressed: Was there any means by which I might make an im-

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pression that should last longer than the instant, upon the diseased will?

I glanced around the room, saddened afresh by its testimony to the chaos in the soul of her who sat and smiled at me out of the depths of some drugged and mysterious peace. I raised the window-shade, and the austere sunlight pierced to every corner of the desecrated shrine. Its rays reached her—and she shrank and pressed her hands before her eyes. It reached one of the numberless photographs of her husband in its cathedral-like frame. In the white summer uniform of the navy he stood, miraculously trim and cleanly, suggesting in his grooming the taut readiness of a strung bow.

I took the wife's hand and led her before the dresser, determined that the narcotic that bound her mind should yield enough to let her see. I held her with my eyes, that something of the normal might penetrate. Then, when the immobility of her fixed and silly smile had given way to a childish dismay, I pointed to the dirt and disorder that she had wrought—the room, her clothes, her hair, the needle-punctures, dull wounds in the firm young flesh of her arms where the sleeves of her *négligée* had fallen away. And then I held before her the whiteness of the stern young figure.

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For a space she followed my eyes to the room, herself in the glass, her husband, back and forth in a wondering round. Then at last her face quivered, and she burst into a storm of immoderate and hysterical weeping, hiding her face in her hair, throwing herself into my arms, clinging there, shaking, holding out the poor dishonored hands.

"Oh, Miss Alyson," she wailed, "make them clean, make them clean!" And, striking her hands fiercely against each other: "Help me! Make me clean! Make me clean!"

I held her for a long time, silently, warmly—for there are moments when nothing can heal but the insistence of human nearness; and she clung to me, the storm ebbing away in broken words, sobs, long indrawn breaths. "I will do anything—I will tell you where it is—I have been so vain of my strength, but I am afraid—afraid. Let us go away—where nothing will remind me of it—the crazy hunger—the wicked peace of it. Let us go away. You will help me—never leave me alone—I am too weak to be alone—it finds me out when I think I am so strong. And Lex—my husband—Lex— You will *never* let him see me—like this!" And again the storm of weeping came, and she tried to pull herself from my arms to the floor.

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But I held her strongly, no room for mere pity, nothing but the will that she should be helped in my heart. And by degrees this tempest ebbed as the first had done, and her poor head lay quietly on my breast. There came a moment when she raised calmed eyes to mine, saying, simply:

"You will help me? You will? I want to be cured. I will be good."

"Let me see, how many days have we before Campbell turns up? To-day is Monday; he comes Thursday. Oh, I ought to have had the case a year ago!" It was four weeks later. Doctor Dietrich bent over to crank up his run-about with an impatient jerk.

"But she has gone through the month without a setback."

"I never saw any one put up such a fight." The doctor turned toward me. "That's what I'm afraid of. A woman like that, all emotion and nerves, and possessed with a determination to be free—the question is whether her heart will hold out. I'll tell you now that's what I'm worried about. I tested it again to-day—and it doesn't suit me!" He threw his little leather bag on the seat and jumped in.

"I'm sure her husband's coming will help her."

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I was thinking of her face when his telegram had come.

"Don't know whether it will help or hinder," said Doctor Dietrich, shortly. "She can't stand any additional emotional strain. But we'll all work together." His hand was on the steering-wheel, and his voice had taken on its usual inspiring heartiness. "Programme is, to drop the evening half-grain to-day. The effects are going to be worse than at any stage we have gone through. Watch her heart. Have all the stimulants ready. You never can tell which one of them won't work. I shall keep within telephone communication after seven—that's the time you have been giving the dose, isn't it? And I shall be here at eleven." The runabout was already raising a cloud of dust along the driveway.

I found Mrs. Campbell so transported with joy that she laughed recklessly at the idea of any difficulty "now Lex is coming." She darted in and out of the house inspecting the floors—we had made the change into Maryland, and fitting up the little country place had been a great resource. She came in to tell me excitedly that she was sure three of the roses would be in bloom by Thursday; she telephoned to the city for "some of the things that Lex likes." She pulled **muslin** curtains down to have them done up;

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the blank that was usually filled by writing to her husband was spent over an utterly unintelligible pile of time-tables. Finally, fearing the reaction that was certain to come, I put her to bed, and lay down on a couch just outside her door to see if my example would make her feel drowsy. She was quiet for a short time, then began turning restlessly from side to side. I bent over her.

"I am so sorry, Miss Alyson," she said, penitently. "But I can't feel sleepy. I'm too happy. Do let me get up and dress for dinner. I feel all the time as if Lex might get here a few days earlier by mistake!" She laughed; but she was shutting and opening her slender hands feverishly.

"Take a long time, then, and make yourself look your prettiest—and let me brush your hair and do it low. Then we can see whether we like it before Lieutenant Campbell comes."

When all was done there was still an hour and a half before seven. And into her voice had begun to come the edge that tells of strained nerves and a craving body.

We spent a forced half-hour in the garden, trying to revive the earlier enthusiasm about the roses. Then we used up a few plates taking photographs of each other and Jimmie, the cook's

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little boy. I had brought my camera with me, thinking that a fad might be useful. At that point Mrs. Campbell was sure she was very hungry, but when we went in to a really tempting dinner she played with it and piteously said she couldn't eat. She began to look strained and gray under all her gaiety, and I, trying to imagine in my own person the nervous unrest that was consuming her, braced myself for the conflict that was coming.

Seven o'clock was on us! Neither spoke of it, but the thought was between us. There was first a walk to be taken. This evening a steady pace was impossible to Mrs. Campbell; she either darted forward or lagged. And soon she lagged so persistently that I knew further fatigue in the close, damp air would be dangerous, and got her home. Then I read to her for a time, but the warm country evening had brought forward its visitation of flying and creeping things which the ill-fitting screens were powerless to exclude. And the attention of the drooping figure opposite to me fluttered and lapsed with the dance of the moths and beetles around the light. There came a point where she jumped up with an impatient cry and began pacing up and down the room. I closed the book, put my arm through hers, and walked up and down and round the

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room with her. For a few rounds she said nothing. Then:

"You won't leave me alone?"—without turning her head.

"Not a minute," I said, holding her hand firmly.

"Because"—she spoke in a muffled voice and still without meeting my eyes—"I am afraid the time is coming when I won't be able to help—won't be able to think of anything—not even Lex—but—That?"

"I understand—I know—" I tried to make my voice commonplace and confident. "I will think for you—the doctor too. He will be here after a while—whenever you need him."

"Oh—" This was a long breath, half of relief, half of dismay.

"Eight o'clock!" I announced, cheerfully, as the tender chimes of a little clock down-stairs began the hour.

"Eight!" she cried, in dismay, and her voice was sharp and anguished. "Only one hour gone! And all the rest of the night! And all the rest of all time!"

"But it is only for a tiny fraction of time that it will be so hard," I soothed her. "And after a few days you will have your husband to make you forget everything else."

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"Yes, yes," she assented, happily, and was quiet.

"Show me how to knit, won't you?" I asked, with spontaneous enthusiasm. "I have some white wool here, and some needles. I'd like to have the pattern of that sweater." That caught her attention. She had knit half of the neck-band, when she began to lose stitches. Suddenly she threw the work down.

"I can't do anything," she half sobbed. "My hands are too unsteady." As I caught the needles from her I saw her hands twitch violently. While I was putting the things away she screamed out:

"I can't keep still— Oh, come here and keep me still!" Her feet were clattering on the floor in a jerking spasm. The rigors of the crisis were upon us.

I went to the frightened woman and put my arms around her.

"Mrs. Campbell, I know that you would rather know that we have a fight before us. We will have to expect all sorts of painful symptoms. But we will find something to ease each feature. You must trust to us."

"Have other people borne it?" she asked, frightened eyes on mine.

I nodded my head.

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She made an effort to steady her quivering lips.

"Then I will do all I can. But it seems as if I would die or go mad with the hunger—and weakness—and I don't want to die—before Lex comes—"

"We will not let you suffer beyond your strength—the doctor will come whenever we call him—and each minute lived through is a gain. Now, first, you must promise me to eat something." She shook her head. "Then you must drink some hot milk."

I read out loud until Norah brought the milk. Mrs. Campbell did not listen, and I hardly knew what the book was, but the sound of my voice was a faint distraction. Mrs. Campbell tried valiantly to drink the milk, but her throat contracted spasmodically, and it was a long and painful process. And the end of it was a violent nausea which left her weak and trembling. I half carried her to her bed, gave her a warm sponge and an alcohol rub and then tried to control the nervous spasms by an energetic massage—sedatives seemed to have no effect. She became somewhat more quiet under this. Although her face was set and gray and her eyes painfully open, she faced the night with more courage, knowing that she had met the enemy face to face.

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It was in this mood that she met the recurring attacks that made of the heavy night a battleground. It was in a moment of comparative ease that the doctor came. She was lying with her cheek on her hand, in her face a gentle happiness that was born of the respite.

"Miss Alyson, I really believe I can sleep," she was saying.

There was delight on the doctor's face as he came forward and read the situation with his keen eyes. Under cover of a congratulatory hand-clasp he read her pulse and nodded thoughtfully to me. It was while Mrs. Campbell was laughing over his account of some medical meeting he had left in town that her hand went to her head.

"Oh—!" she shrieked—"I can't bear it!" And she clasped her head and rocked herself in the effort to endure.

Doctor Dietrich waited for her to be able to speak.

"Is it the old neuralgic trouble?" he asked, gently.

"Yes," she gasped, "only worse—worse than it has ever been— Oh, help me—if I must bear it. Give me something—or I am afraid—I am afraid—" She writhed with agony.

The doctor beckoned to me. "Keep your

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hand on her pulse," he muttered. "Let me know the instant it grows worse. She can bear very little more." Then he sought in his medicine-case for the thing that might soothe.

In the half-hour that followed we tried one expedient after another; hot applications, cold compresses, sedative after sedative. Nothing served. I had left her for an instant to hurry Norah with hot water, and the doctor was looking for another vial, when we both heard a sound. Mrs. Campbell was at the door of the old-fashioned wardrobe in her room. Before I could reach her she had pulled down a skirt, had run her fingers desperately along the hem, and had put it in her mouth, sucking it as a famished baby sups his milk.

"Mrs. Campbell!" I cried, snatching it away. I recognized the old skirt in which she had hidden the morphine when I came to her. She burst into tears.

"You won't give me anything—and I am dying—I must have it— Look! See how strong I am!" She picked up a pencil that lay on the desk and snapped it between her slender fingers. "I don't know what I'll do to you or to myself if you don't give it to me. You are cruel—cruel!" And she fell back on the bed, sobbing helplessly.

We brought her out of that crisis of half-

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delirium, but it left her in a state of alarming collapse. Sweat drenched her, and while the doctor waited in suspense the pulse under my hand gave a throb and began to leap forward with feeble but tumultuous speed. I looked at the doctor, and he understood. She was too weak to swallow either the coffee or the brandy that we plied her with. We gave her a grain of morphine, defeat in our souls. But when she lay back and slept, peace in her face at last, we loved the drug that we had fought. There lies the strength of the Enemy.

Mrs. Campbell's fresh morning face made me wonder if I had dreamed the scenes of the night before. An unexpected letter from Lieutenant Campbell, mailed in San Francisco, after he had sent his telegram, added tonic to the calm of a long and refreshing sleep. She was confident, jubilant.

"Nothing can be as bad as last night," she said. "And, even then, I held out for four hours. To-night I will stand it just so much longer. And then—last night I hadn't had the letter. When the craving comes—even if the pain comes too—I shall look at this. And I won't want anything in the world but Lex. Then I will read it again and know he is coming!"

And the day and the evening did go better.

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When at last I got her to bed and she had dropped into what seemed to be a peaceful doze, my heart beat high with hope.

I was sitting by her, knitting, when a choking gasp brought me to my feet. When I bent over her she grasped my hand frantically.

"I was in a sort of a sleep," she said, "and in it seemed to know that I was asleep and was happy. But all at once something screamed at me in the din, 'Now it's time to wake and dance—and dance—and dance.' And a phantasmagoria of everything awful that could be imagined went before my eyes swiftly, blindingly. In every scene Lex and I were hunting each other, always longing, always missing; horrors and death came in between—sometimes Lex stumbled and fell—sometimes I. And everywhere people being wrecked and torn— Oh,—it was horrible—Don't let me sleep again. Don't!" And she clung to me with hysterical sobbing.

I soothed her as best I could, with dismay in my heart. For with what could we fight this horror of sleep itself, when sleep was the one thing that could save her? And for this tumult of the mysterious physical there was nothing that could cure save the slow, discouraging, wonted physical methods that so mock the hunted soul! Over it all we went: walking up and down the

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room, bed when that had exhausted, sponging and rubbing and sponging again, then a cupful of hot broth, a glass of milk—and the constant appeal of the shattered human: "Can I bear it? Have others borne it and lived? No—not sleep—don't let me sleep. When I'm defenseless the dreadful things will crowd on me again. There's nothing that helps but the touch of your warm, pulsing hand. Don't let go of me—Nancy. Just be sorry for me—that helps—"

So we clung together, until exhaustion brought a pallid substitute for peace, hands wringing and grinding when the convulsions were upon her, but always together. When eleven brought Doctor Dietrich she lay upon her bed, hair streaming damp and tangled over the pillow, her pallor distinct from the mere whiteness of the pillow, her eyes desperately, hopelessly open. Even the doctor's cheerfulness, native and acquired, wavered for an instant and he bit his lip. He raised his eyebrows. My hand was on her pulse at that moment, and I nodded my head warningly—it was rapidly becoming alarming. He tested it himself.

"Brandy," he ordered, chafing her hands. I had hot water at her feet. We got a little of the brandy between the gray lips, but the little that she could swallow brought no response from

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the feeble and intermittent pulse. The doctor drew in his breath with a slight noise.

"Fill the needle," he ordered. "One grain."

She moved her head, a glimmer of inquiry in her eyes.

"Yes, it's necessary, Mrs. Campbell," he said, tenderly. He bent over her to say with cheerfulness, "Better luck next time."

Tears stood in her eyes and brimmed over. One hand outstretched for the needle, the doctor dried them on his big man's handkerchief, accurately using his surgeon's fingers, but with a gentleness greater than that of a woman.

It was at a later hour the next night, nearly midnight, that the hope that had again flared up because of a good day and a most heroic fight during the early hours of the night flickered out. When all had looked promising, and Mrs. Campbell, inspired by the habit of resisting, was beginning to be hopeful, the neuralgia began to encroach on the region about her heart. We three fought it grimly, desperately, until the too familiar danger signals warned us that we must fall back—warned two of us. For Mrs. Campbell, when she heard the doctor's low order to me, roused herself to say, "No!" The word fluttered out, breathed rather than spoken, but it was the most inflexible sound I have ever heard.

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Doctor Dietrich bent over her. His voice trembled.

"We must, Mrs. Campbell," he said, a depth of reverence in his tone. She was too far spent to speak again; her body swayed itself toward the thing it craved; but one weak hand tried to grasp the mattress to hold herself away. And, even while they begged, her eyes denied.

The doctor hung over her tensely until he saw her eyes close, and rest descend upon her like the benediction of a false prophet. He threw the needle across the room, and it shivered, delicately.

"Damn the man who gave it to her!" said the doctor between his closed teeth. And I felt honored that he didn't feel it necessary to beg my pardon when he looked up and realized that I was there!

"Nancy," said Mrs. Campbell, while she was still in bed the next morning, "why did the doctor give it to me last night?"

I could not look in her face as I answered. "It was necessary."

"What could make it necessary? I thought you two were pledged to help me." She did not raise her voice, but I felt on the defensive.

"We are in honor bound to take every measure to save life."

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"*Life!*" she said, under her breath. Her tone made me lift my head. It was so worse than contemptuous, impersonal, and remote. But as I looked she turned away from me with her cheek on her palm. "It would have been so much kinder not to." And her lip quivered.

"Now, now, you mustn't talk that way," I said, taking up the burden of impersonal cheerfulness. "The next time—"

She faced me.

"Did Doctor Dietrich say to you last night that there was still hope?" she demanded. Then, when I could not answer, "Do you think there is still hope?"

No one could have said the falsely reassuring thing to those expectant eyes.

"We think that—now—until your heart is stronger at least—you will have to take a very small amount."

"Will my heart ever be stronger?"

"We can't—"

"Has any one been known to recover from morphine whose heart was affected?"

"I—don't know."

"Does Doctor Dietrich think I can recover from the morphine?"

"He—thinks the best we can do is to keep it down."

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"Oh—" This was a long-drawn breath.
"Well, one can believe—him."

She turned her face away again; and I tried to lighten the weight on my heart by laying out the prettiest clothes I could find. At last, without looking at me, she said:

"Sit here by me, please. I am thinking—and I do not want to feel alone."

I took one hand between mine and smoothed it.

"I suppose," she said, meditatively, "there must have been some one moment when I was weak and could have resisted it—"

"It wasn't your—" I began, indignantly, but she silenced me by a pressure of her fingers.

"Let us think," she said. "I want to think."

Again there was silence before she went on, her face still turned away.

"Of course, when the doctor gave it to me first I didn't know what it was. I was crazy with the pain, and he said he could help me. There was a prick—and then—Heaven!" Her voice had become joyous with the memory. "The next time, of course, I asked for the same medicine. It was a long time before I knew what it was. And then I saw the name, by chance, on a box. And I said, 'Isn't morphine a dangerous thing to use, Doctor?' And he

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laughed and said: 'Not when it is used by a physician's order and for pain. I think *you* needn't worry, Mrs. Campbell.'

She turned her wedding-ring around and around her finger.

"When Lex went away, four months after we were married, I was so miserable and so lonely. Night after night I lay and strained my arms out in the blank darkness and cried and begged Lex—or God; they meant just about the same thing to me—to let me know his poor body was not beating up against some shore—" She shuddered.

"My dear, you mustn't." I lay down on the bed beside her and took her in my arms. She brushed a grateful kiss against my cheek.

"Well, I won't. But I was at some sea-shore place and the glare of the sun on the sea nearly blinded me—I suppose crying had something to do with it. The pain came again. And I remembered the name of the medicine that had cured me the year before. So I got some. That must have been the time I was at fault!" Her tone was triumphant at the discovery.

"After that"—she hurried over this part—"somehow every time I took it I seemed to have to have it. I suppose I really didn't—but it seemed so." The thing in Mrs. Campbell that

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made your heart go out to her—all hers—was the child that lay hidden somewhere back of the beautiful woman. "But then—there's pain!" she said, in a startled tone. "I suppose God knows why He made pain so great and then made us weak—and let us know the thing that soothes and—kills!"

I had been glad that she could not see my face on the pillow beside hers, but now something in her tone made me seek her face. Her great eyes were wide open, and there was a calm strength in her face that I had never seen there before.

"I think you'd better get up," I said, in a business-like tone. "We have ever so much to do to-day."

"All right—in a minute. How much morphine am I to have this morning?"

"Oh, we have got it down to almost nothing—half a grain—and at night."

"Better give me a little more—now. I want just enough to make me normal—myself—as nearly myself as I can ever be—" Again the tone was too detached to be either contemptuous or despairing—and yet it made me feel desolate. "Can you imagine what it would be to have that always, between his face and mine—his heart and mine—and daily growing worse—Nancy! I want you to tell him about it!"

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I was startled.

"But surely you want to—" I began to stammer.

"No, I want you to tell him. You can make him understand better—better even than the doctor."

"If you wish, dear, after you have had your meeting."

"Oh—that!" Her face contracted.

"Neuralgia?" I asked, anxiously.

She shook her head indifferently.

"You know Lex will never be able to understand—really," she went on. "He is too strong—too master of himself to ever be a mere victim—" Again the cutting, impersonal tone. "No, he will love me, but he will pity me—*pity!*" This time she lost control of herself and sobbed.

"It may be pity if you make your eyes red," I said, briskly.

For an hour we were busy with our morning programme. I never worked harder over any one than I did over Mrs. Campbell. I was as anxious as she could have been to have her beautiful self. Hopeless as it all was, I couldn't help wanting her to have her one perfect moment. When I had finished her I gave her a hypodermic and anxiously watched the effect. She was in the still, cold mood, and white.

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"I think it will take another grain to bring me up to normal," she said, coolly. "And I must be that to-day." So I gave it to her and saw the life come back into her face. After breakfast she said:

"I want to try on the gown that I will wear to-night." I brought it, glad that she could think of it; it made her seem more human. It was one of white crêpe that Lieutenant Campbell had had embroidered for her in China, and the frock was very well made. When she was dressed I looked at her. She scrutinized me.

"You think I am looking—myself?" she asked, simply.

"If 'yourself' is a very beautiful woman," I replied, as baldly.

"You are sure that I am not excited or hysterical or anything that is not controlled?" Her eyes narrowed as she questioned me.

"I have never seen you calmer."

"I look like a normal, sane woman, not flawed—fit to be the mother of his children?"

Her eyes were still on me. But I couldn't bear it and turned away my head.

She waited until I had nodded.

"Then, I think I want you to take my photograph—as I am—right now—without waiting a

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moment!" For the first time it was evident that intense feeling was behind the whim.

We went out on the lawn and I posed her carefully with a good background of shrubbery. And it certainly was in a moment of inspiration that I snapped Mrs. Campbell just as you could fairly see the pride and the beauty and the love in her leap to her eyes to greet her husband. When she saw the film she nodded, satisfied. We developed the film at once and made a few hurried prints. And after that she seemed to sag into a settled indifference.

So when she said she wanted to lie down after lunch I was only glad she felt drowsy. I stayed with her until she had fallen asleep; her breathing was regular, and when I spoke to her she did not answer, but stirred and sighed softly. I ran down-stairs to give the maids some orders. I must have been away half an hour telephoning and arranging things down-stairs.

When I ran up-stairs, anxious because there was scant time to get Mrs. Campbell ready for six o'clock, the shades were still drawn. I raised them and saw—her— I have never been able to speak of it. It is only God who can feel calm in the face of such things. But—the drained bottle of poison had fallen on the floor. And on the table, the paper seal unbroken, was a



IT WAS IN A MOMENT OF INSPIRATION THAT I SNAPPED
MRS. CAMPBELL

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box, with enough morphine to have set her free—untouched.

Before I had time to more than catch at the bed on which she partly lay to keep myself from falling, Norah's voice, glad with Irish heartiness, rang from below, welcoming Lieutenant Campbell.

Something came back to me: There was the husband. To be told.

There were footsteps, coming up, two at a time. I was out in the hall, the door of her room locked and the key in my pocket, when he reached the landing.

He looked at me with a flicker of disappointment—evidently he thought I was some guest who would be a third in his home-coming. But in an instant he held out his hand, smiling. He was a big Viking sort of a fellow, with light hair, so ash-colored that it looked gray, and strong, straight brows that were slaty over the brilliant blue of his eyes. And his smile was as dazzling as the sun on snow-crust. I couldn't take his hand.

"Don't go in, Lieutenant Campbell. You mustn't go in!" I can see now the arrested smile.

"What's the matter? Is she ill?"

I told him—something—I have never known what I said. But after the first few words he

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whirled me away from the door and tried to force it. And—somehow—I held him aside and made him be still while I said:

“You mustn’t see her. You must never see her—” all the while thinking. Then I remembered that in the pocket of the nurse’s apron I had on was her picture—I had had it on to develop the plates—and I took it out.

“This is what she wants you to see. It is herself. That—in there—isn’t. She made me take this to show it to you. I know she did.” And—with his dazed eyes on it, not on me—I told him—the rest.

I had done some of the things that had to be gone through when I gave out. I managed to get to the telephone and ask Doctor Dietrich to come, without telling him anything. When I heard his good, reassuring, “All *right!*” I hung the receiver up somehow and put my head on the table and cried and cried and cried.

At first that seemed to be all I needed. But, at last, I raised my head and realized that I was all alone. And then I knew that I wanted something human. I felt that the only thing that could steady me—I am telling this to show what the effect of such a fearful nervous strain is—was somebody’s shoulder to cry on. And I

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couldn't—for the life of me—decide whether it was Doctor Dietrich's or Mr. Kent's. Of course, long before anybody got there, I was myself again. But the thing I can't understand is that you can be as strong as you have to be while the necessity lasts, and then slump into absolute babyishness. It's humiliating, I think.

IV

A CREDIT TO DENSMORE

IT took me a long time to get over the effect of Mrs. Campbell's awful death. Frequently, and after I thought I was quite normal again, it would all come back to me, and I had to live through it once more. But each time it was a little fainter, and pretty soon I was able to realize that I had the right to live my own life and be happy, just as if it all had not happened. But it was July before my family would let me take another case. And then it was only because it was just to "special" some one at Densmore where I wouldn't have to have all the responsibility. My mother never did quite forgive Doctor Dietrich for putting me in sole charge of such a dreadful case as Mrs. Campbell's.

Of course the school you were graduated from has a way of seeming altogether different when you have been out a year. That's understood. But the first time I went back to Dens-

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more I wondered if it really hadn't changed. The superintendent was enthusiastic about the improvements in the equipment, and the new Nurses' Dormitory was better than the cramped little quarters we used to have. But I believe that machines for cracking ice are not quite as important as—well, some other things.

When I entered the big dining-room, that would have been cool even on the hot June day if the forty girls all talking at once hadn't made it seem hot, at first I couldn't make out a familiar face. I had the forlorn, out-of-place, *old* feeling that always comes when you are not known in a place where you used to be of some importance. And nobody spoke or paid any more attention to me than just to look up curiously. A prim-looking nurse came through the door with me.

"How is 37 to-day?" asked an eager little probationer before she had taken her place at her table.

"Fine. Hasn't had any temperature for a week," replied the prim one, complacently.

Still nobody spoke to me, and I stood hesitating a moment, not knowing just where to go. So I was pleased when Miss Stryker caught sight of me and came forward. She had entered with my class, but had had to stay out a year because

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of illness. I had never known her very well—she was a reserved, satirical sort of girl, although I had heard lovely things about her. There was that time when she had asked permission to special a case in the Free Ward who couldn't afford to pay a nurse, and had sat up for three nights and carried her own work too. And nobody would have known anything about it if the woman hadn't recovered and got into a paper in some medical congress. But this time the quiet courtesy of her manner and her nice, *low* voice made me feel as if she must have been my most intimate friend in the class.

"Won't you come to my table?" she said. And I was only too glad to do it. "You are specializing Miss Ardmore, I believe. What do they call her trouble this time?"

"An obscure nervous affection, I am told." But a twinkle in Miss Stryker's eye made me say, before I realized it, "Hospitalitis, I should call it."

Miss Stryker laughed—not satirically, rather pityingly: "After all, that's just as definite a disease as mumps, only it's located in the lobe of the brain instead of in the glands of the neck. It's all a question of mental attitude."

Pretty Miss Lockwood, whom I recognized as one of last year's second-year girls, came into the room.

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"Oh, dear!" she sighed, plaintively, sinking into her chair. "I'm so tired. I've been standing there for four hours. I was so afraid I wouldn't get here in time for lunch."

"What was the case?" asked the eager probationer.

"Appendicitis—heart and bronchial features were the worst. She was on the operating-table almost as long as 37 was last week. *That* was the most fascinating case! Doctor Dupont has made a big reputation out of it—Doctor Moore told me so." And she attacked the luncheon a colored maid had brought, with appetite.

Miss Stryker and I made our escape at the same time. Outside the door she paused:

"Are you very busy?"

"No; I think Miss Ardmore is just as well pleased to have me away. It's so evident that I've nothing to do for her—it rather wears on her to think things up."

"It's the fourth time she has been here in twelve months. Indeed, it's a shame for the hospital to take her money. Who's the physician?"

"Doctor Dietrich. But she called him in after she came here—and he doesn't know her yet."

Miss Stryker smiled rather unpleasantly.

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"He'll be like all the rest. How I hate doctors!"

"Doctor Dietrich is blunt, he's so honest—"

"I don't know him. But when I see one that will admit he knows nothing when he does, I'll believe that. And to have to stand by like a reverential image and see them blunder—! Are you going out?"

"No; it's too hot."

"I wish you'd look in on Miss Padgett—in 37—poor little girl—"

"Oh, then 37's a girl—and young!" I suppose that shouldn't have made any difference, but it did.

"I went in yesterday," said Miss Stryker, "when Miss Rainey was off duty, and I thought she looked forlorn. I believe she isn't doing a bit well. See if you can find out what the matter is. Miss Rainey is so mechanical, she never sees anything but what she's told. That's why I think some one ought to look after Miss Padgett, some one with an imagination. You know I haven't any. Doctors and nurses haunted her for the first week—it was a sort of a show case. But now—" She made an expressive gesture and turned down a cross-corridor that led to the diet kitchen.

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When I had shut the heavy door, all of the noise, the fun, the life, of the great institution was cut off so suddenly that the effect seemed mystical. The hospital corridors stretched spacious, dim, cool, endless. Through doors, opened to let in the air, quiet figures lay straight and calm, limbs graven by the simple lines of thin white coverlids, hands lax at sides or holding aimlessly book or flower. After the din, the heat, of the crowded room I had left, the peace, for a few minutes while my tread sounded sharply down the space, seemed grateful.

Then my eyes, newly adjusted to the dimness of shuttered interiors, saw, under the enforced quietude, the stir and seething that could not be allayed, the aching unrest of this deadly mechanical business of mending faulty bodies. One thrashed aimlessly about, one pale girl tucked a ball of a handkerchief under her pillow at my approach, a man bit off a rebellious sound between closed teeth as he tried to adjust with ineffective hands the screen near his bed so that a persecuting ray of sunlight might not probe into feverish eyes. At the sound of my footsteps heads turned suddenly, an awakening of hopeful expectancy in the dull depths of their eyes, only to subside with weary patience as I passed them by.

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Opposite the door of 37 I paused. A screen hid the figure on the bed from view. Even after I had entered and stood looking at the small, pale girl, she did not move. Yet there was something in the attitude that spoke of tension more certainly than all the uneasy mutterings and longing glances that had pursued me down the hall.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" I asked. She turned her eyes on me, big, hollow eyes from which, together with the color, all life and all interest seemed to have faded. She spoke in a small, thin voice, and as mechanically as if she had been pulled by a string.

"Nothing, thank you."

"Don't you want me to prop you up a little so you can read?"

"No; the doctor told me to be careful, and—she—and Miss Richards warned me." But she shifted her position slightly to bring me more conveniently within her line of vision. She made an effect of moving with caution, as though a natural effort might prove deadly. Yet, with her operation already nearly two weeks past, she should be beginning to feel some freedom of movement.

"But how long ago was that?"

"I forget. It doesn't matter. I don't feel

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strong enough." She opened and shut her mouth like an automaton.

"Isn't there something I could bring you—an egg-nog—a milk punch—?"

"I don't know whether the doctor has ordered it."

"But surely you want to be gaining your strength. Have you any appetite?"

"I don't know—I thought I would be hungry. But the things they bring me don't taste right."

"Have you told the doctor?"

"I—I don't know Doctor Dupont very well. I believe he has discharged me."

"Who's looking after your diet?"

She turned her big, hollow eyes on me again.

"Why—the hospital, I suppose."

"When was Miss Richards here?"

"I don't believe she has been here since that—first day."

At last there was something human, if only in the childish quivering of the lips that couldn't be stilled. Then I realized that her indifference might be from fear of showing weakness. At all events, I knew that it was not a very safe thing, at her stage of convalescence—and looking as she did. So I pursued the opening relentlessly:

"When are you going to get up?"

"I don't know. They haven't told me. Never

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—it seems—sometimes.” This time she turned her head away from me. The helpless fluttering of the little hands made me think of a butterfly in a net.

“Where are your family?” She turned her head from side to side impatiently, protestingly: “They think I am doing so well—they went home. And I haven’t felt able to write.”

“Why don’t you get your nurse to write for you?”

“Miss Rainey?” in a startled, protesting tone. “Oh, she is a very fine nurse—but there’s so little time to do everything in the morning, she says—and of course she isn’t here in the afternoon. And—somehow—I never thought to ask her to do it.”

“I’ll write one for you now. Just tell me what you want to say.”

“Oh, could you? I’m afraid—you’re so kind—would it be all right? They are always telling me to be careful. And you—can you spare the time—?” Before she was half through her stumbling remonstrance and feverish eagerness I had the table pulled out and the paper under my hand.

“My own dear Mother,” she began. Then her voice shook and the tears came into her eyes.

“Oh—I—wait a minute—I’m so ashamed—”

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"That's all right," I said, comfortably. "There's a hair in my pen, anyway. Where's your home?"

"In Virginia—not far at all. But it seems—thousands of miles." The last word came in a gulp.

"What is your name? I believe they haven't told me."

That brought the deluge. There were some moments before she could make herself understood, but when she did I heard something like:

"You are the f-f-first person that has wanted to know whether I *had* a name. I am n-n-nothing but a N-n-number!"

When she had sobbed in the most satisfying manner for about five minutes, and I had held her hand and had stroked it with as much sympathy and elder-sisterly emotion as I could put into that action, she checked herself suddenly.

"What's the matter?" I asked, startled. I hadn't expected her to get through for a good ten minutes more.

"I mustn't. It's bad for my temperature."

"I wouldn't worry about my temperature," I said, scornfully, in the most shocking disregard of professional fetishes. "I'd like to know what Nature gives women such capable tear-glands for

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if it isn't to use them. Tell me something more about your home."

When she had had a most enjoyable time, talking when she felt like it, sniffing comfortably when emotion overcame her at the thought of what "m-mother would feel if she knew how she had nearly *died* with homesickness," and recollection of what "f-f-father had said when she saw him after she had been brought in from the operating-room," and how "*heavenly* the front gallery was at this time with Crimson Rambler all over it," she stopped and said, wonderingly: "But how did you happen to come here? I haven't seen you before, and you're so different."

"I'm one of last year's class—specialing."

"Was Miss Richards here then?"

"No; why?"

She gave a furtive look out into the corridor, and then her eyes came back to mine, clingly. A sudden color came into her pale face.

"I—hate her!" she said, with surprising energy. "She's not human. She's a machine. She's a ghoul—all made of steel and ice." This astonishing contribution to natural history must not go unchallenged. So I said, with proper loyalty:

"Oh no; you must have misunderstood her.



"WHEN I'M NOT A NUMBER I'M A CASE"

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A CREDIT TO DENSMORE

And she has taken the greatest interest in your case! I've heard her talk about it."

"Yes, that's it. When I'm not a Number I'm a Case. She doesn't even know my name. I know she doesn't, for I heard her outside the door. When the doctor spoke of Miss Padgett, she said, 'No, it's 37 I want the directions for.' I'm a Number and a Case. And sometimes I feel like a mouse caught in a trap. Just before you came in I was feeling that there was no chance of getting out of these high, white walls, or down those endless, clean, echoing corridors, until they take me out—dead!" Her color had ebbed again and she looked alarmingly white and exhausted. I began to feel fearful that I had not done the right thing in making her talk.

"There, just turn over now and try to sleep," I said. "You'll be walking out in a week or so back to Virginia and the Crimson Rambler." But she wouldn't listen to me.

"Do you know," she said, "when they brought me in from the operating-room, and when I was sick and suffering and so weak that I couldn't think of anything but of how every inch of me ached and shrieked, and that the only thing that could make me ever get well was to have father and mother and—and everybody I cared for sitting in a ring around my bed and just pumping

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love and strength in with every breath, She sailed in. She was starched and stiff and horribly rosy and strong. She was with one of the house doctors, and he was stiff and starched and shining in glossy white linen, too. And I was so mussed up and my gown so limp and smelling of ether because I hadn't been strong enough for them to dress me yet. The house doctor smiled at me rather kindly. But She just came forward and stood there and said: 'Now you must get well fast. We expect you to be a credit to Densmore—''

"There, there," I said, soothingly, alarmed at the tempest I had raised. "You see she wants you to get well; every one does. So you—"

Her pale eyes were flashing now.

"I didn't know that I came here to be cut up and nearly killed and to die of lonesomeness just to be a 'credit to Densmore'! And I've been shut up here ever since. And I've been nothing but a Number. And if you hadn't come in when you did I know I would have died. I was just thinking how nice it would be to die if that would get Her into trouble!"

I had to work over her for fifteen minutes to get her calmed down. And at the end of that time I sent for one of the house doctors and gave her some brandy to revive her. But I had at

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least begun to find out what was the matter with her.

"‘Imagine how she feels’?" said Doctor Dietrich, genially. "I haven't any imagination. If I had, I should have gone in for fancy surgery."

"But, Doctor Dietrich, she isn't doing well at all. She picked up a little after I talked to her the other day, but she has dropped back again."

"But she's Dupont's patient. I can't interfere—"

"She says the doctor has discharged her; he is so busy, and he thinks she's convalescing."

"Of course Dupont's busy. I forget just what the female population of the district is," the doctor mused. "But Dupont, of course, has fully seventy-five per cent. of that."

"It's something besides doctors that she needs. Her father's ill and her mother can't come. And the nurses here—"

"Yes, I know all about nurses," said the doctor, pessimistically.

"All but Miss Stryker; she told me first about Miss Padgett, and she's *fine*."

"Yes, yes, I suppose so." Doctor Dietrich spoke absently. "Now, see here, I have just fifteen minutes I can spare. I'll look in on Miss Padgett—just a friend, you know, brought in by

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you. Wouldn't it just be a star in my crown if I could pry one of his patients away from Dupont of the cathedral voice? Then, if you'll get the other young woman, we'll talk it over for a minute. Where will you be?"

"There's a little ice-cream place just across the street—"

"All right. It's one of the places the Health Officer brought up for a fine. But I suppose they cleaned up for a time. And it's martyrs for science we'll be."

Ten minutes later we were sitting around a marble-topped table. Doctor Dietrich contemplated his pyramid of soft pink ice-cream with amusement; Miss Stryker had a detached expression as she trifled with hers. For my part, I love ice-cream, and it would be rank affectation to pretend to be superior to the thrill.

"What are the plans of the Relief Expedition?" asked Doctor Dietrich.

"We have to take our instructions from you," I replied.

"You mean you're too busy to talk." He laughed at me, not a bit unkindly. Ten years had dropped from his face since we left the hospital. "All right, then, if I must lead off—I think she's suffering from anæmia."

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"I think it's that she lacks the will to live," put in Miss Stryker, promptly.

She hadn't spoken before, and Doctor Dietrich turned abruptly and surveyed her. There was challenge in her voice.

I said, "She's homesick."

"Yes, yes, I'm sure you're right. It takes the womanly touch to feel out those things. But"—he turned pugnaciously to Miss Stryker—"I can't stand for that modern cant. There's always a physical cause for depression. In her case it's a lack of good red blood."

Miss Stryker acknowledged the opinion with calmness.

"Undoubtedly. But she would make blood fast enough if she once asserted herself. It's a moral defect."

Then they began to do what, if they hadn't been well bred, I should have said was quarreling. And, even granted that they were well bred, it wasn't far from that. And they were letting their ice-cream melt!

"She needs to be treated as if she were a human being and not a Number," I said, feebly, hoping that would stop them.

"That's just what I said!" Both Doctor Dietrich and Miss Stryker turned to me with relief and with unqualified approval. "She

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needs to be treated like a human being and have her will aroused," said Miss Stryker.

"She needs to be treated like a human being and be fed," stated Doctor Dietrich.

You never saw two people approve as heartily of a third as they did. I began to feel delightfully popular.

"I can give her some time in the afternoon, when I'm off duty. I think Miss Ardmore will feel able to get along without me." I said this gravely enough, but I didn't dare to meet Doctor Dietrich's eyes. For he had seen Miss Ardmore, and I knew well enough that in his heart he had diagnosed her case as Hospitalitis of an aggravated type. But of course we both had to preserve a professional reticence.

"The morning is the time Miss Padgett feels worst. I can get in there a little while about breakfast-time. Rainey will be only too glad to have a free hour; she's getting ready for Commencement. And 55's beginning to be ambitious to do things for himself—and it's time," commented Miss Stryker, severely. "Besides, he follows me around with his great hungry eyes, and I *can't* give him any more food than they order. So I can spare the time," she added as an afterthought.

"Who's 55?" asked Doctor Dietrich, quickly.

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"Trenholm? Are you nursing *him?*"—with a grunt of entire disapproval. "Well—try to get all the red meat into her diet that she can digest—and beef juice and raw eggs."

"I shall try to get hold of her mind, take her out of herself," Miss Stryker asserted, stiffly. Then they began to quarrel again, so that the young woman with the lowering coiffure who had brought us the cream began to look at us curiously.

"There's a lover in the case," I said, to make them stop. And you never saw two more interested faces than those two cynics turned to me. Again I sunned myself in their approval.

"Well, well, we'll have to see what we can do about *that*." Doctor Dietrich was all prepared for action. "He can do more than Dupont and ourselves together. Where is he, and why isn't he on hand?"

"He can't be. I think that may be the real trouble. He's one of the Geological Survey scientists. He's off on one of the Alaskan trips. Nothing has been heard from the party for weeks. She's frightened. You see, he has been discouraging about the dangers of the way, so as to gloat over her caring so much, I suppose. You'd be angry with him if his picture didn't look so boyish. And she is convinced that he has been

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spilled out of his canoe shooting rapids. Something may be known of the party at the Survey, but she is timid and doesn't know the proper way to get at them."

The doctor took out his note-book in his quick, impatient way. "Poor little lonesome child," he said, tenderly, under his breath. "She needs hope to make her want to live." Then, after a minute: "I'll see if I can get some news of the party for her. Maybe I can get a message through—I know Kennedy. What's the youngster's name?" He made a note of it. "How did you find out?" He shot one of his quick glances at me as he dropped the book back in his pocket.

"You don't suppose any one could possibly have the rapt expression she wore every time she spoke of the gallery at home, and the way the moonlight slipped through the vines, and the perfume that drifted in from the Crimson Rambler—unless *something* had been said on that gallery—?"

"Yes, yes," was the doctor's only comment. "Well, I must be off. I'll look in to-morrow and give her any news I can gather."

After he had gone Miss Stryker gathered up her gloves and handkerchief in a subdued manner. As we separated at the hospital door, she

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said: "I'll go up to the kitchen and see if I can tempt her appetite a little. The table at Densmore is pretty bad. I'll get Rainey off and take up the supper."

"Is it to be tea or cocoa or coffee?" I asked.

It was a five-o'clock we were having that afternoon in Miss Padgett's room. The hour the Relief Expedition met depended upon how long Doctor Dietrich had had to talk to the Hospitalitis case to persuade her that she wasn't ill, and that the thing she wanted to do was to leave Densmore and go to work to raise money for the Tuberculosis Camp. But, whatever were his preoccupations, he always tried to be with us when we got together at the time when Miss Padgett ought to swallow her afternoon eggs and sherry and needed somebody to divert her mind.

"Tea," said Miss Padgett, forgetting to make a face over the raw eggs.

At this moment Doctor Dietrich entered. He brought a flat bottle out of his pocket and unwrapped it.

"I prescribe port," he said, gravely. And he watched with satisfaction while I put away the cups and saucers we kept there so we could forget the hospital china.

Miss Stryker hurried in.

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"Fifty-five's made up his mind to leave," she cried out, jubilantly, and then blushed her most unbecoming blush when she saw Doctor Dietrich was there. Then she saw I was putting away the cups. "Oh, I did want coffee so much," she said, in dismay.

"Do have some, do have some," Doctor Dietrich hurried to say. And I didn't blame him. It was a delight to watch Miss Stryker when she had had one cup of strong coffee. Her eyes grew bright, a lovely pink flush came to her cheeks that didn't interfere with her hair, and she was so clever and happy. "Coffee is injurious, you know," he added, as a conscientious afterthought.

"I don't agree with you at all." Miss Stryker was rebellious immediately—and her eyes grew bright even without the coffee.

Miss Padgett and I exchanged disappointed glances—we had so wanted to tide them over one afternoon without an argument. And it hadn't been five minutes since Miss Stryker said that she really must stop drinking coffee.

"I don't believe it will hurt Miss Stryker for just this one afternoon," put in dear little Miss Padgett. You never would have recognized 37. Such a wonderful change had come over her during the two weeks in which we had taken charge of her case. She had gained ten pounds and her

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color had begun to come back; you could see that her eyes were a soft, black-fringed hazel.

One thing that had done the patient a great deal of good was to have to think up expedients for keeping the peace between the two belligerents. One afternoon she had started a discussion about open-air treatment for tuberculosis, thinking there could be no possible debate about that. But Doctor Dietrich took the other side! He used all sorts of medical terms that we were not familiar with, so we didn't get very far and hadn't a clear idea of what we were talking about. At last, when I had begun to be afraid that he must be suffering from a nervous breakdown caused by overwork, he came out of an apparent abstraction and said, "Oh, I beg your pardon; I thought you were talking about measles!" Then he bowed with gravity and left.

So Miss Padgett had been sitting up a week, and there was really no reason why she should not have gone home to Virginia and the gallery with the Crimson Rambler, except that, ever since the first day when Doctor Dietrich had found out that the Alaska Expedition was safe, he brought her so much news that I suppose she felt it would be dangerous to cut herself off from such a mine of information.

And this day he sat comfortably surveying us

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all while we sipped the wine and Miss Stryker drank her coffee with double pleasure. And his eyes had a pleasant spark in them. He drew some letters out of his pocket and began fingering them absently. One that had not been opened he kept very much before us. When he took up his glass of wine he laid the letter down on the table. There it caught Miss Padgett's eye.

"Why—where did you get that?" she cried, a great flush rising to her face.

"Queer, isn't it?" he said, frankly. "A much-traveled letter, I should say. One of those things that seem to belong only to rapid-fire romance, but that do really happen sometimes. A letter that came from across the continent—and then lay for two weeks within a mile of its owner." He spoke in a detached tone, and with an inference that no one present was concerned. Little Miss Padgett, her eyes glowing like unquiet flames, was clasping and unclasping her hands in alternate desperation and timidity.

"Have you seen any of the Survey people lately?" I asked, to help things along, for I had caught sight of the address, and the name looked wonderfully like "Miss Mary Padgett."

"Yes, indeed, just this morning, and there's good news of the expedition your—relative, isn't it?—is with. They ought to be here in a week."

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"Just long enough for you to gain the ten pounds you need to be absolutely beautiful," I put in.

But she didn't hear me.

"But, Mr. Tolliver—?" She could hardly bring out the words.

"I don't know anything about particulars, Miss Padgett," blandly.

It really was wicked to tease her so, for she hadn't yet recovered all of her strength.

"I'm sure it's all right, Miss Padgett," I was beginning. "And isn't that letter—" when Miss Stryker had seized upon it and had put it into the trembling hands.

"There!" she said, with flashing and defiant eyes. "I think humor is sometimes out of place!"

But the doctor, his eyes carefully averted from the corner where the little Virginia girl was devouring her letter, was smiling, not at all ill-pleased.

Then we all fell silent. To tell the truth—I don't want to intrude my personal affairs—but—I was a little worried about—something I had said to Mr. Kent—the last time I had seen him. I don't blame him for being—well, indignant. And, with the Hospitalitis case in the morning and the Relief Expedition in the afternoon, I

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hadn't been home very often of late. And if Ned could mix things up—of course he would do it! I don't know what he had told Mr. Kent, but it must have been something about Doctor Dietrich—from what Mr. Kent said. And long before I noticed his interest in Helen Stryker I knew that I didn't care for Doctor Dietrich the least bit! I didn't mind if for myself at all—though if there is one thing that is sillier than the nurse-and-typhoid "romance," it is the nurse-and-doctor fiction—but I didn't want Doctor Dietrich misunderstood. If Miss Ardmore would only decide to get well, there was a motor trip through the Shenandoah that my cousin Evelyn was getting up, with Mr. Kent in it. And that would have been such an easy way to see him. But it was just that morning that my patient had asked me to get her fresh sets of ribbons, pink and blue and lavender and yellow. And it looked as if she were going to want me to array her in invalid finery for the rest of the summer.

"Miss Ardmore is going to-morrow," said Doctor Dietrich, smiling as if at the recollection of some recent triumph.

Of course it's foolish to say your heart gave a leap, when it's only that the action stopped for an instant—as it often does at some great surprise. But that is exactly the way mine felt.

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"And—and—so am I!" We all started at the ring in the voice that came from little Miss Padgett's corner. Her cheeks were flaming, her eyes were beautiful with a soft, dark brightness.

"He's coming home—and he only got spilled out once, and then the water wasn't deep—and—and—" but her eyes ran hurriedly over the rest of the letter. "Oh—I won't have time!" she cried out, in dismay.

"Then this is the last time we'll have to make you take your eggs and sherry, Miss Padgett!" I looked around for the others to come up and sympathize with her in her happiness. I don't see how any one could have helped feeling glad just to look at her. I know I couldn't.

But neither Doctor Dietrich nor Miss Stryker spoke. Miss Stryker was looking carefully into the bottom of her coffee-cup, and Doctor Dietrich was aimlessly polishing his clinical thermometer. Miss Padgett had gone back to her letter.

"Good heavens! What a vapor-bath of a climate this is!" broke out the doctor, irritably. "Well, well! what are you girls going to do now!"

"I think I will take a little vacation trip—with some friends," I said.

"I believe my people are going to Lewes for a few weeks—before I begin private nursing."

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Miss Stryker spoke listlessly. "I'm just waiting for the Commencement."

"Well, Miss Padgett." The doctor took up his hat and then halted. "You know all about the tender womanly care now that these girls' graduating essays will tell you they have showered on you—" he began in his usual way—and halted. Nobody smiled at all. And Miss Stryker didn't raise her eyes.

Brisk footsteps came down the hall, accompanied by a crisp swish—swish. We didn't often welcome Miss Richards with enthusiasm. But this afternoon we fell upon her as she made her entrance, white-clad, glistening, healthy. Miss Padgett was the first to speak.

"You will be able to have my room now, Miss Richards. I am going home to-morrow."

Miss Richards smiled with blandness.

"No one can doubt what the hospital has done for 37. I am sure you are going out a credit to Densmore."

I quite expected Miss Padgett to explode with indignation over this. So I said—to fill the silence—I could *feel* Doctor Dietrich's suppressed smile through the back of my head:

"Miss Padgett is going home to Virginia—to be married—Miss Richards."

You never saw anything more startling than

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the way those words dissolved the starch in her manner. She beamed so I felt as if there were even a possibility that her shining collar might melt into the prevailing limpness. She took a step forward.

"Indeed, Miss Padgett—what a good old Southern name that is!—this is interesting. We didn't know how great a responsibility ours was. Is the wedding to be at home or at church? Virginia, I believe, you said was your home? Why don't you have an out-of-door ceremony? But, no, I am afraid the lines of the frocks this year will *not* lend themselves to a good effect. And that is too bad—it would be so charming out on the lawn—at this season—"

Her eyes wandered and grew absent. But she brought herself back to the present and crossed the room to pat the girl's glowing cheeks with a lingering touch. "I'm sure—he will feel grateful to us," she said, softly, her professional manner not entirely encompassing her.

When Miss Richards had borne our patient from the room, to look over some fashion plates in the superintendent's own apartment—Miss Padgett, injuries forgot, radiantly smiling—we, the Forgotten, the Ignored, were left behind. For a minute we surveyed each other without

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speaking. Finally the doctor's good, hearty laugh broke the spell.

"Well, the Relief Expedition is disbanded," he said, gathering up his things. "It's not the first time the laurels have been misplaced."

At the door he glanced back, not at me, but at Miss Stryker's quiet face and enigmatic eyes.

"Yes, yes. It was to Lewes you said you were going?" The tone was absent—but the glance was not.

V

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AFTER all, Evelyn didn't ask Mr. Kent to motor with us. At the last minute she concluded she would ask Tommy Jenkins instead, because, she said, you didn't have to talk to him unless you wanted to, and he kept you laughing all the time! You see, Evelyn has always had everything she wants, and her only point of view is what will be easiest and pleasantest for herself. She didn't consider in the least what her guests would have preferred.

I think I would have enjoyed the trip exceedingly if that man hadn't been there. I never could appreciate the beauty of anything or just hum pleasantly along with my own thoughts for entertainment, because I had to stretch my mouth into something that looked like a laugh every time when Tommy Jenkins opened his. Half the time you couldn't hear what he said, anyway. But that didn't make any difference to him, because he couldn't hear, either, whether

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you laughed or not; the noise of the motor made it unnecessary to do anything more than look as if you were laughing. After a time you got so you could do that automatically without giving any special thought to it. After that it was less tiresome.

We left home in such a hurry that I didn't have time to say anything to Mr. Kent—except when every member of the family was present—about what I thought concerning Helen and Doctor Dietrich. And I was sure it was true—or was going to be—when, after we got back, I met Helen down-town and found out that Doctor Dietrich *had* been to Lewes to see her. But then Mr. Kent had had to take his mother away to New Hampshire. And before he got back Doctor Dietrich asked me to take a patient up into West Virginia for her convalescence.

When the surrey stopped at last, Mrs. Renwick was so exhausted by the long drive over bad roads that she could hardly walk up the long flight of steps. At the top stood five shadowy figures, women's figures. They were so curiously alike that they seemed, in the half-light, an architectural feature designed by the builder of the old Colonial house, rather than beings of flesh and blood. The spell of silence



THE FIVE SISTERS SEEMED ALMOST EXACT DUPLICATES OF ONE ANOTHER

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and of motionlessness was broken as the tallest of them peered over the side of the piazza and called out in shrill, harsh tones of alarm:

"Father! Father!"

There was no answer. Then she came forward to greet us. I spoke first:

"Doctor Dietrich wrote, I believe, to make arrangements for us? You are the Miss Tayloe of whom Mr. James told him?"

There was a pause before she answered:

"I don't know whether I am the Miss Tayloe of whom Mr. James wrote. But I am Miss Tayloe—" There was a furtive rustle among the four indefinite figures which told that the dry neutrality of her tone masked some telling shot. At least that was the way it impressed me. And I began to get curious right away.

With a perfunctory sort of courtesy Miss Tayloe did all the usual things. We were ushered into the drawing-room, where the group resolved itself into five dark, tall, slender, high-nosed women, who, to us in the lamplight, and dazed as we were by the newness of things, seemed almost exact duplicates of one another. They gathered around with an embarrassed, constrained hospitality. One took our bags, two others hovered around with tentative offers of assistance in taking off veils and hats, Miss

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Tayloe went out of the room to prepare for us a late supper.

The room we were in was high and dignified. In the gleam of the lamplight, which made a dull glow of rich old picture-frames and hinted at the satiny, wine-colored sheen of fine mahogany, it was almost magnificent. The family portraits on the walls reflected bewilderingly the type of the five sisters; the formal paneling of the ancient wall-paper had an impressiveness of its own. We were just helping Mrs. Renwick upstairs when a tall old gentleman appeared, hurrying ostentatiously with conciliatory glances at Miss Tayloe, who appeared, tray in hands, from a door farther down the hall.

"Just went out into the garden a few minutes ago," he murmured, vaguely, nervously rubbing his long, thin old hands together. Then he drew himself up pompously. "A new specimen of *Erythronium* I noticed— I have read in—some-where—that it has rare properties—of special efficacy in intestinal troubles—intestinal," he repeated, his eyes seeking his daughter's face anxiously. "I had no idea of staying out so late."

The sharp anxiety on the face of Miss Tayloe had given place to a rare and tender sweetness.

"If only the night air hasn't hurt you," she

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said. "I hope you are not too tired, father. You know you have grave responsibilities. And this is Mrs. Renwick, and this is Miss Alyson, the nurse, our—guests." She hesitated uncomfortably before she settled on the word. Then she shut her thin lips together and said no more.

"Any friend of my daughters—any friend—will be—" the old gentleman began, but drifted into silence, leaving the sentence unfinished save for the courtly and beautiful and vacant smile on his lips.

Mr. Tayloe must have been very old, although he was still erect, and his high-nosed, thin-featured face was not much wrinkled. It was in the pathetic panics that put to rout the remnants of what had evidently once been his usual air of assured authority that his age was evident—in that and in sudden lapses of thought, heralded by his furtive air of concealment.

I suppose I made the first mistake in allowing the old gentleman to be called in that night. But Mrs. Renwick was hysterical—the result of the long journey and the gloom that hung around the immense, barren corridors and half-furnished rooms of the place she had been sent to in order to complete her convalescence.

"It's just the place for her," Doctor Dietrich had said. "High, fine air, pure water, and if we

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can get the Tayloes to take her in, she will be made. There is a physician there, a fine gentleman of the old school, and five charming daughters—I think James said there were five; maybe it's only one of them that is charming—to cheer her up when she gets morbid and depressed. After such a nervous breakdown as she has had, the main thing, of course, is to keep her in a cheerful and hopeful state of mind. So don't hesitate to call in Doctor Tayloe whenever she needs to be braced up a little."

Now, however, the five stern-looking sisters seemed to inspire her with positive terror, particularly Miss Tayloe. But when Miss Tayloe suggested having her father come in to prescribe for the patient, she quite cheered up.

"At least," she said to me privately, "he is a man, and his hair is white now—even if it probably once was black like theirs." Mrs. Renwick was a dear, appealing, inconsequential little thing, whose long illness had made her more dependent and childlike. "And he looks as if he were scared, too," she added. Which motive seemed to appeal to her, but was not, when you think of it, the best endorsement for a physician.

I ought to have acted on my first intuition that Doctor Tayloe was not to be trusted. But it's pretty hard to have the whole burden of respon-

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sibility of such a case, alone and away from all the patient's friends. Then, too, I hadn't realized what a lot of harm a gentle and benignant-looking old gentleman could do.

For when he came to the bedside of Mrs. Renwick, shaking and helpless as she was in a nervous attack, all traces of benignancy and gentleness had fled. Not even Miss Tayloe, who thought it necessary to accompany him, could have looked more gloomy and terrifying. An awful solemnity engulfed him.

He first put to Mrs. Renwick endless questions, some of them of an amazing irrelevancy. Following this, he began an exhaustive examination. I tried to cut it short by telling him that Doctor Dietrich had diagnosed the case as nervous exhaustion following a long-continued strain; and I suggested that, in the patient's weak condition, we had found it advisable not to alarm her by more discussion of her case than was absolutely necessary. Majestically he waved me aside and went on with his tapping and sounding. He lifted up her eyelid and knit his brows over a scrutiny of the iris; he peered anxiously into her throat; he listened tensely to her breathing; he prodded and poked her from head to foot. But he was in his glory only when, with ceremony, he produced a stethoscope. Having ad-

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justed it, he listened to the action of her heart, shaking his head forebodingly. All this time Mrs. Renwick, her eyes shrinkingly on the doctor or beseechingly on me, was in a pitiable state. I attempted to interfere.

"Since the examination is over, Doctor—"

"The examination is not over. There are some complex symptoms here that I don't like—I *don't* like," was the only reply I won. And he went on, prodding and tapping for a space longer.

Finally he delivered himself of his opinion.

"I find here," he said, tragically, "an alarming condition, a truly alarming condition. The heart action is unsatisfactory, most unsatisfactory. But the primary disease is intestinal. How my brother practitioners can have overlooked this I can't imagine. Your trouble, madam, is senile gangrene of the intestines!"

The effect of this announcement can hardly be imagined. Even Miss Tayloe gasped, and her fixed expression of adoration wavered with a passing doubt. I was too thunderstruck to speak. And then, what could I have said? Even if the thing was monstrous, Doctor Tayloe was a regular practitioner whose standing had not been questioned, as far as I knew. From any standpoint it was impossible for a nurse to

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contradict him. But no such etiquette constrained Mrs. Renwick.

“‘Senile!’” she gasped. Evidently the dread word “gangrene” was of secondary importance in her mind. “Why, that’s what ails people when they’re *old*. And I’m not old at all—even if I have a grown daughter. I married when I was absurdly young—not out of the school-room. ‘Senile!’ And every one says I don’t look a day older than I did then!” She sat up in bed, her indignation giving her strength.

The old gentleman bent down and fixed his terrifying gaze upon her.

“Be careful!” he said, his hand on her pulse. “Your heart is affected! It won’t stand the strain of sudden motion! There-e-e!”—lowering her carefully back among her pillows. “With complete rest for some hours I think you may repair the damage. I wonder how you have lived with that heart! No, no, don’t speak—it isn’t safe, it really isn’t.” And while poor Mrs. Renwick shivered on the bed, frightened almost into collapse, Doctor Tayloe turned benignly to me. “I will bring down some medicine, something entirely new, a discovery of my own, a tincture of Erythronium, which I am about to put on the market. It will be a specific in all intestinal disorders—”

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"But, Doctor Tayloe—" I had begun, when I hesitated. I knew I had no right to speak at all, and, moreover, that it was probably useless to attempt to influence the poor old gentleman. Instead I pressed Mrs. Renwick's hand encouragingly, and smiled at her, shaking my head reassuringly when the doctor couldn't see me. "Isn't senile gangrene rather a rare disease?" I queried, cautiously.

"Yes, it is rare." He turned his face to me, beaming in child-like delight. "I have just been reading about it to-day. And the causes of it are—the causes—" a sudden blank expression passed over his face—then timid fear possessed it. He gave a furtive glance at his tall, dark daughter, and then straightened himself to rally his forces. "We must pay great attention to the diet—great attention," he proclaimed, pompously. "And that again will be an idea of my own. We will give her nothing but fruit; fortunately this is just the locality to get all kinds of fruit in their perfection. The berries are gone. But plums, peaches, apples, melons—oh, there will be no lack of variety."

I protested—I couldn't help it.

"But Doctor Dietrich sent Mrs. Renwick here under my care and with full directions. He wanted her to have a generally building-up diet,

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with plenty of milk and eggs and chicken and beef. He cautioned me to use fruit only sparingly. He was anxious to avoid the accumulation of gas that the fruit would generate. You know the strain of any severe pain on the heart—" I stopped, for a look of childish obstinacy had come over his face.

"You are, I believe, the nurse, not the physician!" he retorted, crushingly.

I turned to Miss Tayloe in protest. But she shut her thin lips in fierce loyalty. "I will see that she gets the proper diet, father," she said.

It was absurd, I know, but I had a queer feeling that it was useless to oppose her, that my poor patient and myself were as much in her power as if we were immured in a donjon-keep by a grim chatelaine of feudal romance.

With his victory Doctor Tayloe lapsed into his gentle other self. He talked benignantly with Mrs. Renwick, bowed chivalrously when he started to leave the room, and, at the door, turned around to bestow on us both his courteous and beautiful and vacant smile.

As soon as the door closed behind Miss Tayloe—

"*Senile!*" said Mrs. Renwick, with even more contempt than indignation in her tone.

After that she had an attack of hysterics that

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left her pitifully weak. The gray light of dawn crept in before she got to sleep.

In two days several things had happened.

I had learned to distinguish each of the five sisters. I had learned their names: Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Calliope, and Euterpe—so called in compliment for their father's classic enthusiasms of fully sixty years before. I had appealed to them, *en masse*, dramatically and emotionally, and had been rebuffed. I had learned that nobody in the village would help me when the edict had gone forth from the House, as the big dwelling on the hill was called. The people that lived in the little houses that lined the roads were for the most part drab-haired, heavy-featured Pennsylvania Dutch, who worked the mines of which Mr. James was the manager. I had managed to smuggle an egg from my own breakfast in to Mrs. Renwick, once. But Melpomene had an unpleasant way of appearing silently and forbiddingly at doorways when one least expected her. She so terrorized Mrs. Renwick that, on the occasion of the egg, I had difficulty in keeping her from trying to thrust its poached iniquity under the bedclothes when Melpomene's head appeared.

The result of all this agitation was as bad as it well could be. And the fruit diet brought on

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an attack of indigestion. After an anxious night, when Doctor Tayloe had done nothing more than appear and shake his head forebodingly and mutter prophecies about her heart, I began to be really desperate. I wrote to Doctor Dietrich, but it would be impossible to get an answer before five days. As it turned out, I didn't hear then—he had been called away from home. And in the two days Mrs. Renwick had lost all she had gained during the past month. She was again in the state of nervous exhaustion that I had found her in at the end of her only daughter's long illness.

On the third morning I watched Melpomene go down the long flight of steps to the surret with a market basket on her arm. Then I descended to find the other sisters.

They were, all four, at work in the big kitchen. As I said, I had learned them apart. And yet, when I saw them together, black hair of one woman intensifying the dark hues of another, swarthy skin making the olive cheek next it more dark, high nose accentuating the fierceness of the neighbor's aquiline profile, I was oppressed by the inexorableness of the family type that had come down, through centuries of dead ancestors, to daunt and perplex me now.

Polyhymnia, glue-pot on the table beside her,

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bent her thin, high-nosed face anxiously over the back of an old ladder-back chair. It was the day, I afterward learned, on which she made her rounds ministering to the decrepitude of the old mahogany furniture, which would have fallen into ruin had it not been for this high priestess to the family pride. The face she raised in response to my entrance had been drained of every characteristic except pride—mere stupid, unfounded, fanatical family pride. Her color was less swarthy than her sisters', her eyes a paler brown. But the nose was higher than any nose I have ever seen, and the glance that shot out at me over the bridge of it was glacial.

Calliope, cake-spoon in hand, had come to the window to follow with her eyes the course of a horse and buggy down the road.

"That's the third time the Dawson girl has been driving this week," she was saying. "And with a different boy every time." Calliope had a quick glance of alert curiosity which was not at all unpleasant. As she glanced at me it was quite evident that she was taking notes of every detail of my appearance.

"What hat is she wearing?" asked Terpsichore. It had taken me a long time to realize that that was what her name really was, and that no one in the family was ever allowed to be nicknamed.

HOUSE OF THE FIVE SISTERS

"What difference can it possibly make to you?" Polyhymnia put in, impatiently. "You can't expect plain people to have any sense of what is fitting."

"But 'plain people' sometimes have a sense of what is becoming!" Terpsichore's tone was distinctly discontented, and I looked at her with a realization that she was an individuality. "They actually go to the city and see the styles in the shop-windows and in the magazines and on people!" I decided, on closer scrutiny, that Terpsichore was probable only in the twenties and wasn't bad-looking at all. She had a good deal of color, and there was an unquiet sparkle somewhere in her black eyes that Tayloesville had certainly done nothing either to create or to quench. And while the dress of the other sisters was of a self-effacing plainness, Terpsichore had used a bit of finery here and there, with a certain sense of the effective.

All this made me feel as if they were more human than I had thought, and so I began my plea for Mrs. Renwick. With the first words each woman stiffened and stood on guard. "I am really afraid for Mrs. Renwick," I went on. "She is losing ground every day—"

Polyhymnia opened her thin lips to say:

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"Our father, Melpomene says, has prescribed a course of medicine and of diet."

"But her own doctor sent her here with entirely different instructions. And I won't answer for the consequences. All I want is for you to let me have some milk and eggs and things like that—something to keep her alive. If you don't want to furnish them, just give the people around here instructions that they are to sell me what I want."

There was a smile of cool satisfaction on her lips.

"If my father and Melpomene have told them not to, you will find that they will not do anything to displease the House."

"In that case it's quite possible that Mrs. Renwick may die here—"

She grew a little paler, but she spoke with decision:

"I promised Melpomene."

I looked in turn at each of the others.

"I promised Melpomene," came from each—determined, troubled, or faltering, but alike inflexible.

I turned at the door.

"Mrs. Renwick has been through a great deal," I said. "If you only knew—"

I caught a soft gleam from the dark eyes of

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Euterpe, the youngest of the sisters. Bent over the sink—the Tayloes kept no maid—she had taken no part in the conversation. But now I saw that the flush of suppressed emotion was on her face, and that her eyes were moist. And she was young and pretty. She had, of course, the features that marked the family. But with her the nose was delicately hooked like that of some high-born Spanish señorita, and the eyes were soft and bright. And when she smiled I saw that the young blood made a scarlet flower of her curving lips.

So it was easy to appeal straight to her, just as I would have done with any of the girls in my class at Densmore.

The tears came into her eyes.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "I wish I could do what you ask. But I promised Melpomene—I—don't know anything about it. Melpomene said father didn't want her to have anything but fruit. And Melpomene brought us all up. I have to mind Melpomene."

I turned away.

"Then I'll have to try to find Mr. James," I said, more to my own troubled self than to her.

At the name fear and joy together ran a race to her eyes.

"Mr. James"—her breath came fluttering over

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his wonderful name, and her little trembling hands instinctively flew to make a shield over her heart—"perhaps Mr. James would help you. He would if he thought it was right—Mr. James is so strong, so inflexible—Mr. James—!"

"Euterpe," came Polyhymnia's dry tones, "you have spoken that man's name three times in the last sentence!"

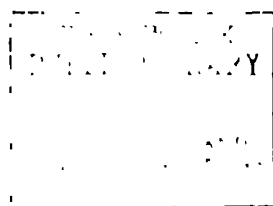
"I never promised Melpomene I wouldn't do *that!*" Euterpe wheeled to face her sister, and the slender figure straightened to its full height, as if some spring had been released. "She just said we were not to speak his name, and I didn't say anything. I think Mr. James was just doing what he thought was right. He always does." Her mood changed rather forlornly. "He is very angry with us—with all of us. He never comes here any more. But I think he was right. He is—very determined, you know, you feel that, and yet his manner is very gentle. It's like"—her breath came fast and her eyes opened to their full extent, starry and wonderful at the daring of her fancy—"it's like the hand of iron in the glove of velvet that you read about!" And the dewy freshness of her spirit made us all thrill as though she were the first woman who had ever poured her love-subjection into the time-worn mould of that thought!

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MR. JAMES DID NOT SEEM A FORMIDABLE PERSON



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I found the office of the Tayloesville Mining Company without much difficulty. Mr. James did not seem a formidable person. He was young and good-looking, and had an engaging little trick of ducking his head and looking up at you out of clear gray eyes that made one disposed to conversation. There is no doubt about it, it is monotonous to be with nothing but women all the time. And somehow there seemed to be more of them at the Tayloes's than there really were. I felt exhilarated just to get a whiff of the cigar he threw into an ash-tray on my approach.

So it seemed to me that if I just told him about my difficulty it would be removed. As soon as I had mentioned the Tayloes' name it was evident that he was keenly interested. When I had finished my story—

"You know, of course, that I'm not welcomed there now," he said.

"I noticed there was something wrong when your name was mentioned."

"Who spoke of me?" he asked, quickly.

"I believe it was Miss Euterpe."

Mr. James unscrewed and screwed on again the top of his fountain-pen. He did it three times. And it required careful concentration of attention.

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"I'll tell you what made the trouble," he said at length. And when he raised his eyes a twinkle had come into them. "You see, I am trying to work out a proposition of my own here. The father of a friend of mine owns the property, and they have turned it over to me to try the effect of some sort of a human management of these Dutch people and Huns and Slavs. We have a profit-sharing scheme and run a school for the children, a library and dispensary, and that sort of thing. We called Doctor Tayloe in once or twice. But—I don't need to go into that with you, do I?" We both laughed. "So I imported a chap I knew for our plant. And the worst of our iniquity is that some of the bolder of the village people have gone over to him."

"Oh, I see," I said. "Of course, Miss Melpomene would never forgive that!"

Mr. James smiled ruefully. "It wasn't only Miss Melpomene. Even—well, they were all pretty sore about it. And so—I really don't see what I can do. I can't afford to make them think worse of me than they do now—"

"Are you, too, afraid of Miss Melpomene?" I asked, with some curiosity. He really didn't look as if he would be afraid of many things.

"Sure!" You couldn't help liking even the way he used slang. It gave him a cheerful sort

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of kinship with all the nice every-day things. "I'm terribly afraid of Melpomene. It was she who first 'taught me to shiver.'" He laughed at me in a barefaced pantomime of terror.

"But it was because you raved so about the place and the Tayloes that Doctor Dietrich sent us up here!"

"Did I really?" It was evident that he was quite honest in his surprise. "I didn't know I had said anything much. I suppose I happened to run across Dietrich soon after I had started in here. They were rather nice to me when I first came. You see, there really wasn't any one else of their kind up here. Why, Miss Euterpe told me—" He paused to tuck a bundle of letters into a pigeon-hole of his desk, and then failed to go on with his sentence. "Why don't you call on Dietrich to come up here and get you out of the mess? My brother says they used to put him up to face Prexy— Perhaps he could manage Melpomene!" He actually chuckled. And I began to lose patience.

"Possibly you don't realize what it means to a busy physician to leave his practice for even a day. And I've written to him and he hasn't answered. But you might help us out with perfect ease. All I want is for you to send over an easy carriage and arrange to have us taken to

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some house here where my patient can be cared for until we can get a message from Doctor Dietrich—”

“I’ll tell the housekeeper to give you the eggs and things. But I can’t peril my standing with the family any further!”

What on earth was the matter with the man? This all seemed so foolishly trifling. And he looked as if he were used to handling big enterprises.

“Mrs. Renwick is so terrorized that it will have very serious consequences if she stays in that house much longer—”

“Oh, she’ll get along somehow,” he replied, comfortably.

“I must say I’m disappointed in you.” I rose. “I had supposed from what I heard that you would be just the one to take the matter up—”

“Who told you anything about me?”

“Miss Euterpe.” I began to put on my gloves, with impatient jerks, I’m afraid. “And she certainly was misinformed.” I turned to go.

“Don’t be in such a hurry.” He half put out his hand to stay me. “Let’s talk the matter over. What opinion has—Miss Euterpe of me? She seemed quite to share the family indignation when I saw her last.”

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"That must have been Melpomene. Euterpe thinks you are a hero where a principle is concerned—of adamantine purpose and tender heart—everything you're not, in fact!"

"Oh, I say! Wait a minute! Let me have time to think this over!" Mr. James, a very becoming color adorning his face, was walking up and down the room in undisguised agitation. He stopped his walk after a minute to pull a chair close to mine and sit down confidentially.

"Now see here, Miss Alyson, we may be able to help each other in this matter."

"Oh, since it's a matter of self-interest—" I said, disagreeably.

"Pretty much everything is—of one kind or another—don't you think? Now I'm going to make a clean breast of everything—"

As if he needed to! I had known all about it for at least five minutes. It was just at that instant that a little flavor of interest had gone out of the day. For I had remembered Euterpe's face in the kitchen that morning. And it was rather a nuisance to have to think of Euterpe just then. It's all very well for a girl to be—perhaps—thinking a little bit about one person—one man, I mean. It doesn't prevent some other man from being interesting for purposes of comparison or experiment. And then, even if you

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haven't the least selfish interest in an agreeable personality, it is very little short of an insult when he first tells you of his partiality for another girl.

"Of course no one could fail to see that Miss Euterpe was the loveliest girl that ever lived," he went on, with calm conviction. "And I imagine she must have seen I thought so pretty soon. I had even begun to think she liked me a little. It helped, of course, that there wasn't any one else here—and I wasn't going to risk telling her what millions of better chaps there were that would be mad about her. Everything went swimmingly until the doctor business came up. It must have been along about that time I saw Dietrich; of course everything about the place seemed rosy to me just then. But even when I knew it was spoiling my chances with her I couldn't give up the lives of these ignorant babies here to the vagaries of an old man in his dotage—"

"But you wouldn't lift a finger to help Mrs. Renwick!" No one could have helped being indignant.

"These people here are under my charge." He evidently thought he had explained the inconsistency. "But now, let's make a bargain. I'll help you if you'll help me."

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"Very well," I said. By this time I was beginning to be interested in the affair. "But what can you do?"

"I could send over and rescue the lady, I suppose. But that would raise an awful fog, wouldn't it?" He was depressed again. "Melpomene is quite capable of locking Euterpe up in her room on bread and water."

"And if I was out of the house I couldn't help you with Euterpe." I was quite sympathetic by this time. "Let's think of something better than that."

"Yes, let's think. Let's be subtle. You be subtle. What's the use of being a woman if you can't be subtle!" He dug his elbows into his desk and buried his hands in his nice thick hair.

At that moment—despatched by a special providence—a little boy came past the windows. Sometimes he whistled and sometimes he sang. Into the silence of our painful thought his words rang with startling significance:

"One little, two little, three little Injuns,
Four little, five little, six little Injuns,"

he chanted.

"Six little Injuns kicking, all alive—
One broke his neck and then there were five."

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Mr. James straightened his head and a gleam came into his eyes.

"Five little Injuns on a cellar-door—"

The voice began to grow softer in the distance.

"One tumbled off and then there were four."

"There you have it!" Mr. James rose to his feet in his excitement. "There *we* have it!"

"How? Where? Why?"

"Why, of course, there you have the whole method suggested. It's as clear as anything—"

"I don't understand—" I was becoming exasperated.

"Did you ever try picking them off, being a sharpshooter—using the method that inspired epic suggests?"

"No. How?"

"Let me put you through an examination. Are you an observant person? What would you say was Polyhymnia's pet weakness?"

There was no possibility of hesitation.

"Family."

"Good. What is Calliope's?"

"Curiosity."

"Good. With its corollary, gossip. Terpsichore's?"

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"Clothes."

"Correct. With its associated idea—admiration. Euterpe— But we needn't discuss her."

"I've already ticketed Euterpe. And it's a great weakness, too!"

He blushed.

"But Melpomene?"

We breathed the word together and in equal trepidation. I felt hopelessness settling over me.

"I don't understand how this is to be done at all. And I've been away so long Mrs. Renwick may be in a collapse. I must hurry."

"I'll drive you over—or as near the house as is expedient. And I'll elucidate my modern, Melpomene-proof methods as we go!"

His confidence was so inspiring that, even before I had taken my seat in his car, we were laughing as if the battle had been won. In the course of a mile we had worked out a capital plan of action. But as we drew within sight of the House our rash confidence faded and a pall settled over us both.

After all, there was Melpomene!

The day after my interview with Mr. James—the milk and broth that I had brought home was used up and but one egg was left—I descended resolutely into the kitchen pantry. I knew that

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Melpomene had taken her father out for a drive; in pursuance of the methods determined on with Mr. James, the others had been despatched to their special, prearranged engagements. I had no scruples whatever about robbing the larder. I regarded myself as the chief of commissary sent out to forage in the interests of the hospital corps. Moreover, I had the consent of four sisters. Why should I be afraid of Melpomene? I don't know why I should have been. But I was.

So my hands shook guiltily as I filled the little basket—which I had calculated would do excellently as a masquerading work-basket in case of necessity—with supplies enough to last my patient for a day. And when I started back up the stairs I jumped nervously at every creak of the boards. I was at the top of the flight and was just beginning to congratulate myself on getting back in safety, when the front door opened slowly, and Melpomene walked majestically in.

I knew as soon as she appeared that there was no hope. So I stood quite calmly still while she climbed the stairs, invested with all the panoply of justice, raised the lid of the basket, and confronted me in accusing silence.

“Where are my sisters?” she then demanded.

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"They are all out." I could hardly raise my eyes to hers.

"That is extraordinary," she said, in her overbearing manner. "May I ask if you know where they are?"

Her tone roused every particle of opposition in me. Otherwise I would not have had the courage to defy her.

"Miss Polyhymnia is by this time in the library established by Mr. James at the Mines. I suggested that she might find there some points regarding the genealogy of her family that she is anxious to establish. Miss Calliope has also gone to the Mines, to a meeting of the Mother's Aid Society in the Assembly Room. I thought that would be of interest to her, and arranged that she should meet Mr. James's sister there. With Miss Calliope's knowledge of the locality and her interest in the neighborhood happenings I knew she could be of assistance to Miss James. And I knew"—I couldn't help smiling a little when I thought how avidly, at that moment, the curious one was, in all probability, drinking in information diffused by anxious mothers—"I knew that was what Miss Calliope was most interested in. Miss Terpsichore has gone over to consult Miss Eveleth, the teacher in the school at the Mines and a really charming girl, about

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the way to make up her new foulard. And I believe she is planning to wear it to one of the musical evenings at the Assembly Hall, to which Doctor Rogers is to take her."

I paused. Under that gaze my courage was beginning to need reinforcement.

"And Euterpe?" There was not a shade of expression in Melpomene's voice.

My own voice trembled a little. For this last was really a dangerous thing to say.

"Miss Euterpe—I *believe*"—somehow the perfectly transparent evasion in the "believe" was comforting—"is on the road to Beavertown with Mr. James. He was to drive her there in his car."

Melpomene's face blanched.

"For what purpose?"

"I understand there were certain things they wanted to talk over."

Melpomene drew a long and very difficult breath.

"I understand," she said. Then she closed her lips and I waited.

"Disloyal!" There was fierce contempt in her tone. "A genealogy—a gossip—a dress—a lover. For such things to desert—him!"

I took my courage in my hands. She did not seem as angry as I had expected—only sad.

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"But, Miss Tayloe, isn't it natural that they—being women—should care for these things?"

She faced me, tragedy in her dark face. .

"And am I not a woman? And have I not cared? Has there been one of these things that I have not held in my hands and put away for him? I was twenty-one when Euterpe was born and our mother died. There was a time when I read, thought, *flirted*—" there was grim satisfaction in her voice. "Could you believe that I was once the best cross-country rider for miles around? And in the twenty-two years there has not been one thing I cared for that I have not seen fall away. My beauty, my friends, my pretty frocks, the man who loved me. Poverty came, sickness came, isolation and dreariness. The people of our own class have disappeared from the near-by towns, and we have been left alone. There was only my father left. You can't imagine what he was when I was a child. He was a god to me. And I have seen him change from a brilliant, courtly man, the best physician this side of Washington—to what he is. There was a time when every one in the village hung upon his nod. And now they are going over to the Mine doctor. It's all he had left, and they're taking it away from him. I'm

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afraid if they take it away he'll die. And if they take him away from me I'll die!"

She made your heart ache. But it wasn't possible to express your sympathy.

"But wouldn't it be easier for you all if he gave up practice?"

It was then that she turned on me in a real fury.

"Give up his practice because he had lost his mind! My father *imbecile*! I shall never admit it. To see him who was the core of my heart being despoiled, inch by inch, of every quality by which he had stood in my heart as *himself*—And the moments when he was like a child, unconscious of his own failings—and the worse moments when the agony of it flashed across him and he *knew*! I'd do anything, crime even, to keep that knowledge from other people. And I'd die to keep it from himself!"

"But the lives of others—Mrs. Renwick's life perhaps, certainly her health—at stake!"

"What do I care! Oh, I suppose I don't mean that really. But there is just one thing in the world I do care for! Nothing seems of much importance beside my father!" There was the light of fanaticism in her eyes. And I felt myself very helpless before it.

We were standing in unquiet silence, when we

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heard slow steps coming up the stairs outside. A tender glow came over the fierce, harsh face.

"There's father now," she said, adoringly. "He would put the horse up. It's the hardest thing of all for him that, since we sent the man away, we girls sometimes have to take care of the horse." In the very instant of her speaking there was a heavy fall.

I was the first to reach him. It's an odd thing that even love doesn't seem to be as swift to aid as professional training.

So it happened that in the half-hour that followed I took the lead. Miss Tayloe carried out directions fairly well, but it was in a dazed, faltering way, and often, when quick action was necessary, she stood still and wrung her hands mutely. He was desperately ill, with one of those attacks of acute indigestion, the stoppage of all the functions, that are so often fatal with very old people. If we hadn't gone to work upon him he would probably have died where he fell, for the heart action was very feeble. I had to give him a hypodermic of strychnine before the Mine doctor got there. But he was much easier and the circulation was starting up finely when Doctor Rogers bent his pleasant face over him.

You never saw anything sweeter or more

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docile than was that dear old gentleman. There was eagerness in the readiness with which he gave up the conduct of things to us. And when he saw from a glance at Melpomene's face that she was docile, too, he settled back, and an expression of beautiful restfulness came into his face. He was so dear and so grateful for the least little thing, and the exquisite breeding that was an inalienable part of him was so touching when you saw him lying there helpless before you, and knew that if he did recover it would be for only a few faltering years, that the pity you felt almost made the hands that were ministering to him shake. Yet the benign sweetness so beamed through him into your soul that you knew that was the greatest part, that it was divinely alive and young, and so would be always. The poor dear was so glad to give up and not have to strain himself to be wise any more. And the strange part of it was that the three of us moved about him as if we were taking part in a religious ceremonial. When our hands met as we worked over him the chance touch became the sign of some great brotherhood whose entrance rites we three, so lately unknowing and antagonistic, were performing in unison.

So, when the excitement was all over, and, almost before she knew how ill he was, Doctor

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Rogers assured Melpomene that her father would soon be well, she was quite different. And the humorous part of it was that it was Doctor Rogers—whose coming to Tayloesville had made all the trouble—to whom she was really grateful. It seemed as if she *liked* to be subordinate to some one, and that when the necessity of being the stern despot of the household was over, something unnatural and harsh in Melpomene dropped away, too.

When the other sisters came in, very guilty and hurried, their anxiety about their father filled the first moments. And when that was over and the inevitable pause came when they eyed Melpomene expectantly, nothing worse happened on Melpomene's face than a grim little smile or two. Even when Euterpe and Mr. James drove up, Mr. James quite shamelessly jubilant, and Miss Euterpe dewy and wistful and very, very rosy, nothing of the expected tempest materialized. So Mr. James began to take possession of the various practical details that had to be attended to, in his easy, efficient way—it was queer I hadn't noticed how much Mr. James looked like Mr. Kent—and Doctor Rogers made every arrangement for Doctor Tayloe's illness, and Melpomene sat back with hands that seemed to me, just at the first, ominously empty. I

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slipped up-stairs to give Mrs. Renwick her dinner, and she felt so much better that she wanted to come down and read to Doctor Tayloe. Then it became apparent that Doctor Rogers had met Terpsichore before and was attracted by her—I thought he was very foolish, for she wasn't anything like as interesting as Melpomene. I suppose, of course, that since she was ten years or more younger, it was more suitable. But I couldn't help being sympathetic with Melpomene. Not that she had an idea of the sort herself. He was just an abstract sort of a symbol of the masculine, I think.

I *am* absurd, I suppose, but all the time I was getting Doctor Tayloe comfortable for the night, I was thinking of Melpomene. The long, dutiful, *lost* years of her life rolled out before me, endless, starved, dumb. I tried to imagine what the lover was like that she had sent away; I imagined the scene when she sat her horse at the end of a cross-country run, a queen in her little court. I had to tell myself over and over again that she had done the right and heroic thing. But I couldn't help feeling just angry to think of all her murdered years. I wonder if any one else is foolish enough to get into a passion for some one else over things that have for a long, long time been over? And it made me

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angrier than ever to think of Terpsichore and Doctor Rogers having everything made so easy and pleasant for them.

But with Euterpe and Mr. James it was very different. They had a right to be selfish. It was all right—divinely right. I saw them as they drifted away from the rest to say good-night—the little fluttering hands that somehow knew the way around his neck, the great eyes that were lifted up adoring him, the trembling scarlet flower of her mouth—and his face, white now, with the awful seriousness of his young passion. All night long they were haunting my consciousness, the worshiping eyes, the scarlet mouth, the white face whose lips strained at their leash of control—the man and maiden seeing, feeling, wanting nothing but each other—the flower and the fragrance and the melody of life!

VI

SCHLOSSER'S WIFE

WITH proper diet and a calm mind Mrs. Renwick's convalescence was rapid. So it wasn't very long before we could go home.

After I got Mrs. Renwick back in Washington, about the first of October, I had a number of uninteresting cases that are not especially worth while telling about. Helen and I were together on one rather exciting surgical case; she asked to have me called in as night nurse. And I felt flattered, for it was a pretty difficult one—difficult from the medical standpoint, I mean—you couldn't get interested in the woman to save your life. But Helen and I got to be very good friends, so that, when we were not on a case, and were going out somewhere, we very often went together—and sometimes Doctor Dietrich was with us, although he wasn't very satisfactory as an escort because he usually had a call just as you wanted to start out. But Mr. Kent and he developed a real liking for each other—and I

SCHLOSSER'S WIFE

never did have to explain about Doctor Dietrich, for the first time I mentioned his name Mr. Kent said, with a laugh: "Yes, I saw him yesterday evening with that Miss Stryker you are so fond of. And you only had to see the way Dietrich hurried to change his mind when she disagreed with him about something to know how it was with *him*."

The next interesting case I had was Mrs. Schlosser. Mr. Kent had talked to me about the Schlossers. He had been interested in the way the German had developed since he came to this country ten years ago. So, when I got to the place where Doctor Adams had sent me to take charge of a stubborn case of intermittent fever, and found "H. Schlosser, Ladies' Tailor" over the door, I was quite excited. I thought perhaps I might get some notes that Mr. Kent could use in his book.

But I hadn't expected anything as queer and old-world and uncanny as the scene that faced me when a little girl, in a suspiciously dark flannel sailor suit, had ushered me into the room over the shop. It was late in a winter afternoon. The gas flared from the draught of the open door as if it were a torch in a gale of wind, and all the sharp light and shadow of the place leaped and shivered in a witches' dance.

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Half of the bed was in shadow. Around it sat three stooping and forbidding old crones. They had queer hoods on their heads; and, as they shook their heads mournfully over the patient and mumbled something into their knitting, words that sounded a little like the German we had at Miss Ambleton's school and a good deal unlike it—a kind of witch language, I thought to myself—they might well have been the Fates themselves.

I know I shrank away as the oldest of them pushed back her hood to peer at me distrustfully. I almost made a horn with my fingers as I had learned to do in Italy as a precaution against the evil eye. Then I went past them to the patient, who lay with the gaslight streaming over the heads of the old women full into her face.

She was a dark woman, the power of whose frame was masked in fat. She had the thick, greasy skin that comes from generations of unhygienic food.

The fever that had mounted with the afternoon gave her cheeks a deep flush and her black eyes a brilliancy that endowed her face with a kind of sullen beauty.

She was swathed in flannel underneath her gown, and the reek of the fever, of the winter-old garments of the women who surrounded her,

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of the heavy woolen coverlids which were piled on top of her, filled the close room. I began to understand the story that the doctor had given me, of the stubbornness of what had seemed but an ordinary tertian fever—malarial in its origin.

My instructions were to go to work immediately to reduce her temperature. I sent the little girl for basins, water, towels. She paused at the threshold to make the German courtesy, so winning in its suggestion of deference from girlhood to maturity. When she came back she had pressed a little brother into service. He made his funny little bow, to the imminent danger of the pitcher of water he was carrying. When I had taken it from his hands he ran to the bed and threw himself on it. Mrs. Schlosser smiled and talked to him softly as she kissed the eager little face.

"*Wofür ist das?*" demanded the oldest of the cronies.

"A bed-bath," I replied, briefly. "And I will have to ask you to leave the patient with me."

An excited clamor arose as she repeated what I had said to the others. The three rose and grouped themselves threateningly around the bed, barring off my approach.

"*Ein bad!*" they repeated, threateningly, to each other. "*Ein bad! Im winter!* She vill

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kill—dese Americanish y'ung ladty—Vat for she come? She vill kill. *Ein bad!*—vidt de fever!"

I appealed to the little girl, who stood watching the scene with alert black eyes, which revealed a curious degree of superiority to the excitement of the women.

"Go get your father," I said. The patient's color was higher, her skin more burning. Even while she frowned her sympathy with the others she thrashed her heavy body despairingly about. The child nodded with encouraging intelligence and slipped out of the room.

When she returned, it was with a small, thin, dark man, whose clothes, even in that dim and agitated scene, were shown to be of the most perfect neatness and taste. He beamed his appreciative delight when his eyes fell on my white uniform. Then he bowed with an accentuated deference. I explained my difficulty to him. He turned to his wife, with a word or so in German—gentle, yet authoritative; turned to the women and waved his hand with a negligent gesture of command. As if by a miracle the fierce clamor subsided; the threatening Fates became three toothless and shabby old women; the wife turned submissively to me with:

"My man—he say—" on her lips. With a

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final gesture of crisp command, he turned to the door, the little daughter clinging adoringly to his hand. As he opened the door he turned to me:

"If dere is anyding more I can do, send for me. But now—one of my ladties she vait downstairs. I must her no longer keep." With the word "ladties" the atmosphere of deference enveloped him. It seemed as much a mark of his calling as the name he stitched, with a final flourish of silk, into his suits. As I turned to his wife I wondered whether he had stitched it, too, into his soul.

In an hour I had Mrs. Schlosser's temperature down almost to normal. She was so comfortable that when I asked for fresh linen to put on the bed she assented meekly, although I saw her wince when she took from under her pillow the key to the heavy carved clothes-press where the sheets were stored.

I was amazed, when I opened the cumbersome doors, to see the store of household linen. There were piles of sheets and pillow-cases and towels—one would think they might last a lifetime. I slipped out enough things for a day or so. And then, in settling her for the night, I threw aside the grimy woolen underwear. Here she protested fiercely:

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"I shall die—you vish to kill me—I shall die. It is a fever I haf! Call my man—he vill not that I be killed—he lofe me. Call him!"

When Schlosser appeared again his eyes brightened as they fell upon the fresh white bed, the clean towels on the wash-stand, his wife's dark hair neatly braided. He sniffed appreciatively the fresh air pouring in through the open window.

"Dese iss goot," he said, rubbing his hands with that gesture that seemed like his trademark. "Dese iss Americanish—dese iss for what we came to dese country. I vill tell de children to come in dat dey may see vat iss right!"

The woman looked at me sullenly and antagonistically. But when her husband patted her hand encouragingly, as lithely as a cat she slipped down in the bed until her cheek lay against the hollow of his hand. There she lay restfully, looking up at him with eyes of mute adoration.

It was late when I got down to supper that evening. I had waited for the seven children to be sent up in relays to see the room and to pay their duty to the sick mother. There was the tall boy in his first year at the high school, holding himself very straight in his cadet uniform,

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the meek outlines of his Teutonic face contrasting oddly with the brusque "Americanish" manners he affected. There was the sister, almost as tall as he, her sleek hair rolled out over an enormous "rat." There was a clumsy, grinning youngster, all legs and hands and feet. The little black-eyed girl whom I had first seen came in again, and the little chap of eight, and another little girl, who told her mother she had been all day with the "foreladty." And last toddled in on his short, fat legs a jolly little Dutchman of four, whose face and hands made it unnecessary to explain that he had spent most of his day in the kitchen. He squared himself up to me and demanded fiercely:

"Vat for don't you mage my mutter vell right away?" And when I lifted him up to Mrs. Schlosser, her arms closed over him, as if the touch of him was food and drink. If there were, in the older children, together with the very real affection that was evident, the beginnings of a sense of superiority, of criticism, with the babies her place as Hearts'-Empress was undisturbed.

When I reached the table all the children had finished their supper and had gone. But Schlosser, his knife and fork before him, had evidently waited for me. And with him was a trim and

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handsome girl. They were sitting quite near together and cozily talking. His elbow on the table and his head on his hand, he was leaning toward her, a dawning glamor in his eyes. His other arm was resting on the back of her chair. He rose as I entered, vaguely confused and courteous. But the young woman looked anything but pleased.

"Dese iss Miss Alyson," he said to her, apologetically, "who has to make my vife vell here come. And dese iss Miss Jennings—" he turned to me. "De best skirt handt in de city. Who has also most kindly helped me mit de children undt de house." Then, as a sloppy-looking colored girl brought in a sloppy supper, he flushed distressfully and looked down at the too evidently serviceable red table-cloth. "Ven my vife she ill—" he began, loyally. "But vere are de napkins, Miss Jennings?" he turned to her to ask. "You said you would do dat for me."

"I tried to get some, but Mrs. Schlosser wouldn't give me the key." Nothing more than the expression on Miss Jennings' face was necessary to explain her opinion of her employer's wife.

The tailor flushed again, more deeply. "My vife—" he began.

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"I can easily arrange those things for you, Mr. Schlosser," I broke in, in pity of his confusion. "I have the key to the linen-press. It isn't necessary to disturb the patient about details of that sort. In fact, it is necessary that they be kept from her. She needs perfect rest."

The little man's face lit up with pleasure.

"So iss it—she must not be disturbed. If she were vell it would be oderwise."

It was evident that it was with difficulty that Miss Jennings refrained from speech. But she thought better of Mrs. Schlosser and of me, too, I am sure, when, at the other end of the table, I became tactfully absorbed in my supper, and the interrupted conversation could be renewed.

"Undt I sent de suit up yesterday," Schlosser said, fervently, making an effort to include me in the conversation. "But dere ain't come no vordt how see liked it." His attention drifted away from me back to the magnetic eagerness of the forelady's gray eyes, and there remained. "Only de husband 'phoned from his office dat I vas to send up de boy to get some clothes to be cleaned undt pressed undt to get my check. So my heart sank." Tears of alert sympathy had sprung into Miss Jennings' eyes. The tailor caught their gleam, and for a moment he stammered in his speech. "Undt—undt I t'ought:

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'Ach, dere, Schlosser, she don't like it! Now vill you catch it!' You know I yust had to please Mrs. Byram—de first time she came to me—also dere are so many ladties dat go by mit her. Undt I had t'ought so much to get de lines—undt she iss not easy to make lines for." Miss Jennings nodded an expert assent. "But I sent de boy for de clothes—I ain't said nodding about de check—I couldn't bring myself to do it ven I felt like dat. But Mrs. Byram she sent down wordt by a maid. Undt vat she say vas, 'I ain't never had a suit I liked so vell!' My, but I vas gladt!" He struck the table in his excitement. And his face, mirrored by that of his forelady, wore a radiance of joy absolute.

During two days Schlosser watched me, when the day's routine brought us together for a few minutes, with a look on his face that was neither critical nor approving, merely observant. The end of that time found us at the supper table. When the children had all slipped from the room and Miss Jennings had gone home, I started to go up-stairs. But he detained me with a gesture that was at once courteous and authoritative.

"Dere are some dings I vould like to speak mit you. Vill you for a few minutes vait?" I

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assented and slipped back into my chair. He thought for a moment. "I do not know yust vat to say first," he explained. "My vife—" He halted and then turned squarely to me. A glance at my uniform with its suggestion of impersonal service evidently had the effect on him that it has on most persons—it is wonderful what things people do tell nurses. "Dere iss no use dat I go round about," he said, with the acute intelligence in his look that went far to explain his success. "You see all—it iss more as useless dat I hide. Dere are dings—I would like dat dey be oderwise. I am Americanish—naturalized. In Germany ve vork so hardt—my vife she vork all de time, for me undt for de children; *ach*, how she vork! A man could never it forget! Undt she save so hard dat now ven she need not, ven I don't vant it, she has forgot how to spend. She cannot be Americanish—naturalized. I haf much learned. I haf stop to smoke—to drink beer. A man who is much by ladties cannot drink. Undt I haf learned to dress right—my ladties vould not like to haf me by mit dem if I did not dress right. If I vas a pretty man it vould be oderwise. I vould not haf to be so careful. But I haf learned, undt now I like it. I can't do no oder vay. Undt I like to haf enough of clean napkins at de table

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—one by almost effery day! Undt clean towels! Undt I vant de children dat dey speak always English. Undt I like dat de little vons dey wear dresses of cotton—like Miss Jennings says—dat can be washed by almost effery week. Undt all dings Americanish.”

There was a pause while I nodded appreciatively, and he was evidently searching for the best way to say what was in his mind.

“I would so much like dat my vife she vant dese dings like I vant. But it iss because she has been so goot to me and has vork so hardt dat she cannot learn right avay dese dings all at once.” He scrutinized my face to see whether there was any shade of criticism of his wife before he went on. It was not hard to put just the right expression of sympathetic appreciation into my face. Indeed, I was beginning to feel it, in good measure, for the man, if not for the woman. He went on, reassured:

“I would so much like dat my vife—dress so dat she could be my foreladty. Maybe you haf observed my foreladty, Miss Jennings?” He turned toward me a face that was, although I am confident he did not know it, a little conscious. “Miss Jennings iss von fine Americanish ladty”—an irrepressible admiration had crept into his voice. “She iss not like de oder girls

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dat vork for me—I do not belief dere iss von pin in her whole dress! *Efferyding* look like it hook togedder! Undt ven she veard de shirt-waist suits dey hook togedder! Undt ven she veard de one-piece dresses dey do not break at de vaist. It iss de stiffening dat she veard by dem, or it iss de lines dat she has—I do not know *wofür* it iss." There was a solemn, respectful, scientific interest in his face.

"I would like dat my vife she veard dese shirt-waist suits undt help me vidt my ladties. I like dat ve vork togedder. If she would only do it, I dress her grand. I dink dat it iss besser dat husband undt vife dey vork togedder." He had turned his face away, but I could read the little man's honest thought in the back of his crimsoning neck.

"Now you"—he faced me again—"are an Americanish y'ung ladty. Undt you are here dese vay—as a nurse. You could make my vife see some dings dat I could not. Undt some dings dat Miss Jennings she could not. I do not dink my vife she like to learn by Miss Jennings. I see how you bring down de fever yust by a *bad* undt fresh air. Please stay so long as you can. I don't care how much it cost—undt my vife she don't need to know. Please show her undt de children how de Americanish people

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do dese dings. I haf dem teached 'De Star-spangled Banner' undt dings like dat at school. But some time we buy a home, undt de boys dey can vote undt be real *Americanish*. Undt 'De Star-spangled Banner' iss not all about being *Americanish*. Dere are oder dings!"

At first it was not easy to carry out Mr. Schlosser's wishes. Every change proposed his wife fought with the silent, passive negation that is so much harder to contend with than open opposition. If clean towels were brought to her to use, she "saved" them and depended upon a well-worn and trusty one thrust under her pillow. If, in the moments when work was slack, Miss Jennings made gingham frocks for the children, Mrs. Schlosser apparently bowed to her man's superior wisdom. But, after a few minutes' whispered conversation with the oldest daughter, the children themselves systematically "forgot" to don the new garments. With regard to herself, however, she submitted, with many an antagonistic, sullen glance at me.

But after a time circumstances helped me. Under a sensible and hygienic regimen she began to improve in spite of herself. On the third day the fever came back in a much lighter form. On the sixth she skipped it entirely. So she

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began to be half convinced that I knew something, and her opposition lessened. The house was allowed to take on a pleasant freshness. Mr. Schlosser began to go about with a smile of triumph on his dark, lean face. His clothes acquired an almost supernatural gloss and finish. The crisp Americanism of the children became a thing to wonder at.

It was on the tenth day that I ran down into the trying-on room with a message for the tailor. The doctor had said Mrs. Schlosser could sit up, and she wanted him to see her sitting in state. I saw that a fitting was in progress, and waited at the door, not wanting to interrupt.

A stout woman stood before the pier-glass. Schlosser, with the air of an acolyte endowing a priest with his ceremonial robe, was lightly imposing a long coat, as yet sleeveless, buckramed and white-stitched, but in its sketchy condition showing plainly the genius of the designer. For, under its caressing folds, mere flesh became gracious majesty, line after line swept away from the shoulder in gracious curves. The tailor fell back to observe the general effect. There was a tense moment for us all. He ran his hands with loving appreciation over the line of the shoulder.

"Dese iss *right!*" he said, with finality. A

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pucker appeared between his eyebrows. "Dese need to be lifted—not more dan an eight' of an inch, Miss Jennings." Then, while with anxious scrutiny she followed the chalk-line he had marked, he fell back a step, raised his arms with a gesture of benediction.

"Dese iss peautiful," he said, happily. And there was the creative joy of the sculptor's modeling touch, the painter's thumb-flourish, in the movement with which his arms fell to his side, embracing in their calm descent the expression of his artist's soul that stood before him.

When the coat was taken off and put on a near-by form, the master turned his scrutiny to the skirt. Pleated and braided and of complicated design, it yet followed flowing and graceful curves. Schlosser twitched a fold here and there to try its effect upon an embryo pucker. He let them go.

"It iss all right, Miss Jennings," he said, admiringly. "Dere ain't anodder skirt-hand in dis city like you." And he gave the approving pat of one good workman to another on the girl's straight, shapely shoulders. At least, that was probably what it was meant to be; he himself did not know how affectionate was the touch or how caressingly the hand lingered. But the girl lifted her eyes to his and blushed. And the

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man's soul awoke—I saw the start of it—and it stood alert.

I don't know why we all, at the same moment, felt Mrs. Schlosser's presence. There was no sound. But when we turned she was standing at the door, her big frame, in a large-figured kimono, stiffened, her black eyes magnificent in fury.

"I don't vant it!" she gasped. Her clumsy English struggled with the force of her passion. But the great sweep of the arm with which she banished Miss Jennings from the room left no doubt of her meaning. "I vant her to go away!"

The forelady's firm, fresh-colored cheeks paled, and her lip dropped until her handsome face was a mere mask for conscious fear. Mrs. Schlosser turned to her husband. One degree more of intensity would have made her voice merely strident.

"So dese iss vat you mean by being Americanish!" she said. "Dat iss vy I haf so hated it—I haf felt dat it come between. Dese iss vat come of learning de children to sing dose songs, undt dese iss *vas für* you vant to veer out goot cloth by having clean napkins by almost effery day, undt towels like only de *Herrenschaften* could expect, undt thin dresses for de children to freeze

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in im vinter—dat vy *she* make dem—undt vy you don't like wrappers, undt dink dese divorces right, undt talk all de time about dresses dat hook togedder undt haven't no pins!"

We were all so stunned with surprise that, even when she paused a moment for breath and gathered her kimono around her with a great, fierce gesture, nobody spoke or tried to keep her from speaking.

"Undt dat Miss Jennings—vat she mean? I say, she ain't vell brought up! *Vas für* if she does all hook togedder, undt *vas für* if dere ain't a pin about her, undt *vas für* if she has got a shape dat look like you'd haf to take a hammer to make it bend! Dat don't say her character all hook togedder! Dat don't keep her from looking at a married man vidt eyes she don't ought to use!"

The effect of her words was nothing short of melodramatically startling. The poor, puzzled stout lady, still endowed with the forelady's skirt, sank limply into a chair, with a suggestion of broken bones. Miss Jennings, with flaming, indignant face, caught up some work and fled from the room.

But it was the tailor to whom the moment was crucial. His eyes had sought the forelady's face for one dazzled instant. When the door

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closed behind her his eyes still lingered. In the first moment they were longing; in the next they had renounced. It was not until his tragic eyes rested on his wife that he started as if the blaze of light had hidden an abyss. But I am sure that before the start of horror had come the renunciation.

Finally he awoke to the embarrassment of the immediate situation. I have seen, in the queer way in which we nurses are forced into glimpses of life for which we have yet no point of view, many difficult moments. And I have never seen a man, even with the double advantage of fine instincts and social training, deal so effectively with a situation that might easily have overwhelmed him. He turned from his wife with a glance that included both myself and the patron.

"My vife," he said, with an intonation that threw a mantle over the crude elemental passion of the woman as gracious in its suggestion of dignity as the coat whose lines he had designed—"my vife, she iss ill. It iss true—iss it not so?—vidt all dat ven de body iss not vell de mind goes into strange places. I am but glad that my vife show, now as always, her care for me. For de rest ve vill forget the *märchen* the fever has been muttering into her ear. My

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laddies dey haf always been patient vidt me—I shall hope for a continuance of de favor. For my wife I beg that you vill forgif her dat she has been a little excited. Mrs. Bennett, I vill send von of de girls in to you. Now, Leah, I vill help you back up de stairs."

He opened the door, and we heard his low, gentle voice on the stairs: "So, mind dese landing—das iss goot—it iss hardt for de poor veak limbs." And her sobs, broken, hysterical, with words between:

"Ve cannot both stay—it iss I dat must always stay—always stay. She shall go. It iss right dat I should stay. It iss not dat I hate her. It iss right!"

It took a long time to get Mrs. Schlosser calmed down and settled for the night. She seemed to feel no special antagonism toward me. But when I came near the bed on which she lay, thinking, thinking, a heavy, painful line between her heavy brows, she motioned me indifferently away.

The next afternoon Mr. Schlosser came to me, distressed, apologetic.

"My wife she say she vant dose women back," he said. "I am sorry. I wanted dat she haf one of dose nurse laddies like de Americanish

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laddies haf ven dey sick. I dink it besser so. But she say *now* she vant her own people—dat it do her goot to haf some von who speak her language—dink her thought—dat vat she say."

"I think perhaps she is right, Mr. Schlosser," I said. "I have really done about all I can do. The fever is broken. It's just a question of gaining her strength now. It's all right—I understand."

I was in Mrs. Schlosser's room—the three old women hadn't yet come—when Miss Jennings came in to take her leave. The girl was trim and handsome and tailored. She was so absolutely like the tailor's form on exhibition in the window that one wondered if she were human—until one saw her face. Then one knew that she was human—poor Miss Jennings! For the hours had worn traces in the smooth brow and firm cheeks. There was pain marring the self-satisfied curves of the handsome mouth. One felt that she was in the grip of an emotion greater than she was meant to feel. But she had panoplied herself for the encounter in her own armor. It was easy to see, as she looked at the shapeless woman on the bed, dark hair wild over the pillows, face heavy and coarse in repose, that the knowledge that her own smug self was irreproachable in its tenure gave her assurance.

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"Good-by, Mrs. Schlosser," she said, with a self-sufficient little laugh "I'm going. Riley has been trying to get me away from Mr. Schlosser for a long time, but I hadn't quite decided. I'm hurrying now before he fills the place."

I wondered how Mrs. Schlosser would meet the girl, whether there would be an aftermath of the night before. But there was nothing fierce or angry in the face on the pillow. It was merely implacable—like a force of nature.

"Good-by," she said, calmly. Then, while the girl nervously put on her glove, "Dere ain't going to be anodder foreladty." An irrepressible gleam of exultation stirred the determined composure of the other's face. Mrs. Schlosser went unemotionally on: "I going to be foreladty myself, like Schlosser been wanting me to do for a long time. He say he going to dress me grand—he dinking now about some shirt-waist suits vere I all hook togedder." Then the first gleam of humor I had ever seen in her pulled at her full lips: "I don't believe I going to look like Schlosser dink I going to do!" The smile faded, and she looked keenly at Miss Jennings. "I dink maybe I been lazy. I rest sometime from all I used to do before Schlosser began to make so much money by his ladties. I don't like to vear all dose tight kind of dings. But I

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got to try. I like my comfort—I been resting sometime. Undt I dink a wife can neffer rest. Now I got to do like Schlosser like—”

“Mr. Schlosser?” The girl looked around inquiringly. “I’d like to say good-by.”

“Schlosser’s not here—”

Miss Jennings turned away, a sudden, white dismay in her face. Mrs. Schlosser caught it. The implacable look faded from her face. In its place came a glow of womanly pity—for one moment she was all mother.

“Come here,” she beckoned the girl. When the forelady had reached the side of the bed, Mrs. Schlosser pulled her down, speaking softly. But that was not so I wouldn’t hear. It’s a queer feeling to know that people forget you as completely as if you were a piece of furniture.

“So iss it besser—Schlosser don’t know. Maybe, yust for vonce, he thought he saw something—den it vas gone. Now he ain’t remember he effer thought it. My man iss a goot man. You ain’t vant him to know—?”

The tall girl turned aside a wavering face.

“So—so—dat vat you dink now!” spoke the older woman, gently. “You dink you like him to know—just so he feel sorry. I know—I know. But you ain’t can know. You ain’t much older as my Emmie—undt you ain’t can

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know yust vere dat could leadt you. No, no, my mädchen. My man is a goot man. But no von of us we ain't can know. You hold yourself too straight to valk *dat* path. I like it how you hold yourself. I fight you—it right I fight you. But I like you yust de same!"

Miss Jennings shivered a little, then held out her hand. The other woman took it and looked up into the handsome face. But that apparently was the end of her magnanimity. Jealous envy was in her eyes. She burst out fiercely:

"Vat you dink dat you look at my man like you did? You dink he care? He yust kind to you like he been to all de oder handts." Her voice was full of the double arrogance of the married woman and the employer's wife. "I say you go home undt tell your Mutter she ain't brought you up vell. Vat you dink dat you look at my man vidt eyes dat you don't ought to use? He don't dink of you. Schlosser's *my* man!"

Her scolding voice rose yet harsher and more shrill. And as the tall and tailored Miss Jennings hurried out she cast back at the woman on the bed a look of impotent rage and defiance—like that of a child that has just been spanked!

Soon Mr. Schlosser came back, and all the time I was packing my suit-case and dressing to

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go home I heard the low murmur of their voices from the next room. The three old women had arrived, and something in me must have changed, for their faces, as they huddled together in one corner of the room, now seemed benign, and the wrinkles of their faces were infinitely wise. The youngest one was knitting mittens for Carl, the second had found Mrs. Schlosser's long-neglected darning. Their needles were flying as they gossiped together. The oldest one—and I noticed what kind of eyes she had—was brewing some kind of herb tea for the patient on a little gas-burner. I don't know what was in it, no ingredients that I recognized, but the aroma of it was comforting and pleasant. It made one think of low-hanging cottage roofs and a mother bending over a sick child.

As I passed to and fro, picking up things of mine that the children had scattered about, I caught passages of the low-toned dialogue between husband and wife. They spoke in German, better German than they generally used—at least I could understand. Perhaps I was aided by the quality of their tones, and by the evening quiet, and by the moonlight which began to stream through the window and which seemed somehow a part of it all. The talk went on dreamily, a brook that wandered through

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accustomed ways to a happy meadow that one seemed to know. And this is what I remember of it; perhaps I have added something or left something out:

"No, no, Herman, it is not right you go so fast you go alone. Even if you do not go so far, you will be happier; the children—and what are we without them?—we will all be happier—if we go together. Maybe you will miss some things, but you gain others."

"I wish not to go where you cannot go, my Leah. Have I ever wished to have it so?"

"Not wished it—but so you have had it. You dart forward where I must drag behind. But you must wait—even come back a little—as you once did—"

"When we were young, Leah, when we walked in the gardens to hear the music, you with your knitting, I with my pipe, it was often you who went ahead. When, going back, we raced down the shady lanes, it was you who were fleet of foot, I who was clumsy—"

"So—" There was a long pause, during which the voices of the old women were heard, fragments of speech from close-clustered heads.

"*Vas Smiser's daughter—undt she so vell brought up!*" Another voice: "*But his vife! Vat she do? But it ain't can be!*"

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"Dost thou remember when first I lagged, Herman?" Mrs. Schlosser's voice, speaking her native tongue, had notes of melody in it that I had never heard.

"No, Leah."

"Thou didst laugh at me because I was so heavy-footed. Thou wast almost impatient, Herman. Then I told thee. It was when—Vilhelm—"

"Ach, Liebchen! Forgive me that I so forget!"

"I remember how thou didst turn back—I can feel yet the carefulness of the arm that helped me. Still thou wouldst forget and again hurry forward. Thou wast always so quick, Herman, so eager. Then thou wouldst remember, and then again turn back. Soon I crept yet more slowly, because there was a babynestling in my arms. But then thou wast proud to walk beside me, Herman, and to hold the baby when I would consent. I can yet see thy face! Thy very ears glowed with pride! And thy ears were never small, Herman!" There was a burst of laughter, but subdued to the pensiveness of the evening quiet.

"Then there was always a little one toddling at my skirt, my man."

"And sometimes one at thy skirt and in thy arms, my girl."

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"Once I remember thou hadst to carry Minnchen, and I Hans. But Minnchen was slow in walking—"

Her voice broke on the name, and they both were still. But it was a silence that told you their hands had crept together.

"I wonder—" her voice was timid. "Thou canst never hear me speak of—her. But dost thou think the moon sleeps there as softly as—that night before we left?"

There was a pause, and then his voice, husky with the man's constraint of tears:

"It is so, I am sure, Liebchen—even as the light through the window there."

Her voice broke out: "Oh, Herman—I miss them so—the baby arms—the burrowing heads. What do I do that I have no baby in my arms? They are so grown, they are so wise. They do not need me any more—their mother."

Oh, the good wisdom of the man's kind voice! No tailor now, only man!

"They need thee more than ever, Leah, because the way is hard—"

"Oh, but the *feeling* of the downy heads on my shoulder, the soft warmth of the baby arms, the *feeling* of them, Herman!" I wish I could tell the cooing sweetness of the pleasant voice.

SCHLOSSER'S WIFE

"It was so easy then to answer every need, so easy and so sweet!"

Again there came a pause, and then the man's voice—only different, more alive:

"How thou wert beautiful, Leah!" Still something new stirred in it. "And now thou art beautiful, Leah!"

"Dost thou remember, Herman?—how awkward thou wert—how awkward—and how dear—the night thou asked me—?"

"And—oh, my Liebchen—the night thou gavest—!"

Silence like a curtain dropped heavily between them and me—a silence filled with tenderness so great that it throbbed with something that I had never known and all but lacked the power to feel. The murmur of the old women's voices rose against the perfect stillness, until, by the very insistence, the impertinence, they made you hear.

"His vife—vat she do?"

"She go home to her Vater—for a time."

I went out into the hall to get my umbrella that I had left there. Mrs. Schlosser, vivid against her pillow, was smiling softly up at her husband; he had one arm stretched over the coverlet; the other, slipped under her shoulders, drew her toward him.

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The oldest of the women rose to stir the brew that was steaming the air full of aromatic fragrance. She said:

"Yah, for a time. He come back after a while. Der vife she always vin—der vife she always vin."

One of the others said:

"It don't seem like dat to me. Vat you say for Sara Gumprecht—for Lise?"

The oldest of the women—her face was very calm—spoke quietly:

"I ain't said *ven* she vin. I say she vin. It ain't make no matter if she ugly to hurt, or if she silly to make him mad, or if her tongue so bad he run from it. *She got der name undt she got der ring.* It ain't der vife I'm sorry for! One year—two year—by her man's lofe dat come back ven he dink how tender she vas—how like a child ven first he speak. Or by her children dat stay by mit her undt do goot by her for vat she have suffer. Or by her neighbors dat make her name sweet. *She got der name undt she got der ring. By von ding or by anoder, in von year or twenty, der vife she always vin!*"

Schlosser stirred. He bent his face—everything but his wife forgotten—laughing now with the teasing unconsciousness of a boy, closer to that of the woman who hung upon his words.

SCHLOSSER'S WIFE

"If vat she say be so, vy don't you dink so yesterday? Twenty year—vat dat to you? Some day de children make it up to you—de neighbors—I ain't no matter—so—Leah?"

She smiled, a momentary lifting of her full lips, in response. Then her face settled into the heavy intenseness that was more natural than his quicker moods.

"Maybe dat so—maybe it ain't. Maybe de children come back or maybe you come back. Dat all right for Mrs. Armstein—she almost eighty years old. But I, Herman, I'm only t'irty-five!" She opened and shut her hands and turned her glowing eyes on his with a tigerish leap of meaning into them. "*I ain't got der patience to wait!*"

Of course I really didn't do a bit of good at the Schlosser's—unless it was to bring down the fever. And she would probably have come out of that anyhow, she was so awfully healthy. But—it was for myself—I learned something, but nothing that would help Mr. Kent with his book. I could hardly say just what it was I learned—I could hardly express it to anybody. And the last person I could tell it to would be Mr. Kent.

VII

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AFTER this I shall always believe the most glaringly absurd farce on the stage is true, for nothing could be so incredible as that any group of sane, grown-up persons could have got into the snarl of misunderstandings that we did over the case of Lieutenant Rathbone. I wouldn't have believed it myself if I hadn't been at the very center of the tangle. Of course, to understand just how humorous it was, you would have to know a great deal of what went before and came after, that I couldn't very well tell just now. And, anyway, I seem to be the only one that thoroughly appreciates it. Mr. Kent, who usually has a very keen enjoyment of a joke, never quite saw this one.

For some months before, he had not been eager about my nursing, although before I began, when he was at the height of his enthusiasm for social service, he had quite approved. He was no less enthusiastic about every one doing

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something—in general—but he was never able to be sympathetic about the individual cases I took, and was indignant every time he called on me or wanted me to go somewhere and found me on a case. And he was so horrified every time it was a question of a man patient under sixty that I found it simpler not to take them. Though I suppose Mr. Kent really hadn't any right to have any opinion about it—in a way.

So, when he himself suggested that I should nurse his cousin, Lieutenant Rathbone, I was surprised, until he told me that the Lieutenant was at the navy-yard at Boston, and that he himself was going to spend the week-end and a few more days—five days in all—with Colonel Grant, the commanding officer of marines, at whose house his cousin was being cared for. And he was going that same week.

“As long as you are going to nurse somebody,” he said, trying to grumble but not being able to, “you might as well be where I can keep an eye on you.” He spoke lightly, but there was a still glow under the calm of his face that made me know it really did mean something to him. And I knew just how he felt—it was pretty nice to think of being in the same house all that time, when we hadn't seen anything of each other for months, only in snatches.

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"I don't know exactly what is the matter with Eric," he went on. "They are non-committal about it—some sort of nervous collapse, I believe. But I understand he doesn't have to have much done for him—I looked into that before I suggested you. It's too bad; it had looked as if he would be able to marry Ridgely's daughter after all. By the way"—he said this with the elaborate carelessness that never deceives anybody—"I forgot to tell you, he is engaged to a particularly nice girl, and is quite properly foolish about her. Eric always was a thorough-going chap."

Then I knew the rest of it—why he was willing to have me nurse the case. He needn't have been so cautious, though. I never would have believed that I could be so completely indifferent to taking care of a real hero. But now I hardly felt excited at all, although it was a case that was interesting from a medical standpoint and from every other.

Mr. Kent hadn't arrived when I got to the navy-yard at Boston. It was an interesting-looking place, and the little whiff of salt in the air that reached one occasionally was invigorating after the soft enervation of the early spring-time at home. Mrs. Grant met me in the drawing-room of their big, roomy quarters. She was

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in a great hurry, because she was due at a meeting to make arrangements for an entertainment to be given for the benefit of a reading-room for the enlisted men, and after that had a tennis party to give orders for, and a riding party to organize so one of the younger officers would get engaged. She couldn't do much more than greet me heartily, show me to my room, and turn me over to a maid and to the doctor.

Doctor Sturtevant was a ruddy, well-set-up, breezy gentleman who didn't look to me as if he took his professional duties too seriously. I found out afterward that this impression was a fairly just one, for his life pursuit was a never-ending game of golf with Colonel Grant. Even his interest in Lieutenant Rathbone's case was due not so much to admiration for his heroism as to approval of the prime physical condition that seemed to have made his recovery one of the wonders of the service.

"I tell you, Miss Alyson, I never knew anything to equal it," he said. "It isn't the mere animal courage that everybody made such a fuss about at the time—one expects that. But as a feat of endurance— Well, it's unpardonable that Rathbone won't golf; there isn't a player in the service would have his staying power. Those coolie Chinese are the devil when

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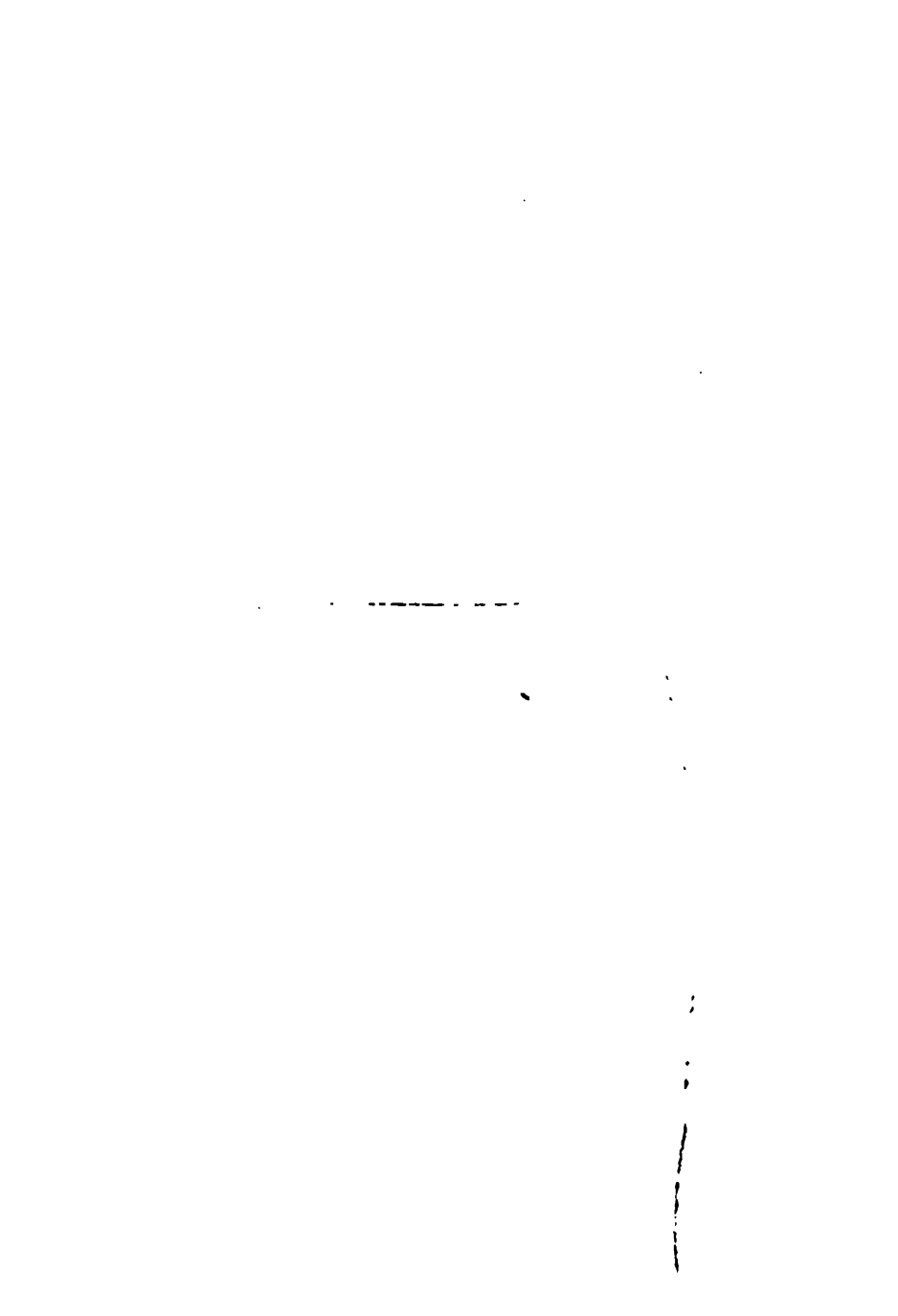
they are all stirred up about something they don't know anything about, and it wasn't a particularly peaceful job getting young Grant away from two or three hundred of them. You know, of course, that the job of the marines is to hang around where there's a chance of a scrap, hoping to get killed in sufficient numbers to call people's attention to the fact that the Monroe Doctrine has been pinked in a new place and Congress would better get busy. It was a son of Colonel Grant here that was hurt in this case; that's the reason Rathbone can have anything he wants in these parts. And the dogged endurance of it, swimming the unspeakable waters of that damned canal—I beg your pardon, but it was, you know; they had been throwing the carcasses of their cattle, that had been dying of some kind of a pest, into it for a week. It took Rathbone eight hours to get back to the *Helena*, swimming at first and wading after they tore his arm all up—bleeding all the while, though he managed to screw up the artery somehow. And he carried the youngster all the way with his good arm. And kept him out of the water, too!"

"I'm so glad to know just how it happened," I said. "I—"

But Doctor Sturtevant was warming up to his story.



"IT TOOK RATHBONE EIGHT HOURS TO GET BACK TO THE 'HELENA'"



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"But where I as a surgeon take off my hat to him is the fact that he pulled through. Even if he had stood losing so much blood, if he hadn't been keeping himself fit as a bruiser, the gangrene would have got him—of course no human being could have escaped after having his wounds soaked with that water for hours. And the siege in the shambles of a hospital-ship with the cheerful proposition of treatment for gangrene—Well, he went down from a hundred and eighty to ninety-four pounds—that tells what he went through! But, bless you, when he started in to gain he stoked up at the rate of two pounds a day for a week, and after that one pound per diem. He holds the record for convalescence at Mare Island, all right!"

"But why does he need a nurse now, Doctor Sturtevant?" I asked. It was thrilling to hear about such experiences, but, after all, I did have to get my instructions.

The doctor's cheerful, tanned face took on as serious an expression as it was adapted to do.

"We have rather a critical condition to meet just now. After being apparently well on the road to complete recovery, he collapsed—cerebral anæmia set in—"

"I never knew of a case—"

"You are not apt to—of any duration. For

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when the patient is so reduced that that sets in there isn't apt to be any need of treatment—this side—”

“But won't he recover?”

“Oh, he's technically convalescent now. We stopped the injection of salt water into his veins long ago. The trouble is, he had to be kept on a reduced diet so long that he can't make blood fast enough. At times, when there isn't blood enough to circulate to the extremities and feed the brain too, his mind just gets tired and quits. His sight is affected, too—retina isn't supplied with enough blood to visualize correctly. He tells me that he often gets objects in outline—people are bodiless ghosts.”

“Wouldn't he have had better treatment if he had stayed in the hospital?”

“Oh, poor chap, he got so blue. And we all thought he would get well faster if he had something to occupy him. So Grant got him detailed here, and he even tries to work a little. When his feet are higher than his head his mind is as clear as yours or mine, and he visualizes correctly and knows all about the mental condition he has been in. But after a time of that his feet get icy cold, and he has to pull them down and have them warmed up. And when they're down he is liable to think or say any-

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thing at all. Then he goes all over the vicious circle again. There really isn't anything to do but wait—"

"But what do you want me here for?" I was getting more and more confused.

"I want you to feed him well, amuse him. You might massage that arm pretty vigorously. The wound has healed, but the arm is stiff yet. And— Well, I suppose I would better explain the conditions, and then you will see why it is necessary to have a nurse with him. Rathbone is engaged, you know, to Miss Ridgely. Now, Rear-Admiral Ridgely has the regulation naval grouch against the Marine Corps. He considers being a marine officer a shade worse than not being in the service. So, though he can't find anything personally against a man who has been advanced five full points for gallantry, if the slightest suspicion of Rathbone's having any mental trouble should get out, I don't believe there is any doubt that Ridgely would use that as a pretext for breaking off the match. And that though every surgeon in the service assured him that the condition was a temporary one. So you see your main duty will be to keep Rathbone from making an ass of himself before people—"

"That's an inspiring occupation," I couldn't help laughing.

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"A necessary one. The Grants know about his condition, of course, but nobody else. Luckily Miss Ridgely has been up in the Berkshires since a few days after his return, and then she only saw him for a few minutes. By the time she sees him again I expect him to be all right. If a breath of this gets out it will be brought straight to the Ridgelys. So you see—not a word to any one. Now I've got to work off another visit before I go to the links." And he was off.

Lieutenant Rathbone was in his room writing letters, the maid told me. When she took me up there I thought I had never seen anything as bare and austere as that room. The rest of the house was much like other houses, only it was wider and lighter and more roomy than most. There were hangings and rugs and big comfortable easy-chairs and sprawly wicker ones that made you think of long, lazy summer afternoons with a book. But if there ever had been anything comfy in that apartment the Lieutenant had evidently had it taken out. The air was not impeded by any softening window-hangings—not a bit of it. The shades were rolled up to their highest, and there wasn't even a cotton bedroom rug on the glistening floor. Not a thing was allowed on the mantelpiece but a business-like traveling-clock in a leather case;

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the spread on the bed was one of the dimity kind they use in hospitals, and the bed was just a narrow cot that looked hard. A whole platoon of shoes on trees, that had evidently overflowed the closet, was arranged accurately on one side of the bed; on the other was an enormous tin bath-tub. The bookshelves were full of methodically graded books. And on the dresser were five pictures in silver frames—all of the same girl—I could see that even if I didn't look.

A man was sitting with his back to me, writing at the broad, shiny oak desk.

"I am the new nurse," I said; and he jumped to his feet and greeted me with automatic courtesy. He was so big and so erect that at first he overawed me. But as he looked at me his forehead wrinkled in a pained, tired sort of way.

"I don't know why I am to have another nurse," he said, unhappily, as he sank again into his chair. "I suppose they told me, but I must have forgotten it—" he was looking tentatively down at his feet, and from them to the top of the desk, and then, dubiously, back to me. Then he seemed to realize that this reception couldn't be very comfortable for me, so he smiled reassuringly. "Not that it isn't a pleasant chance," he said, "whatever may have brought you." He

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was lost again, with his eyes rather wistfully on his letter. "I hope that you will find plenty to—amuse you here." His amiable intention was so evident that I felt as if I must help him out.

"Don't worry about me," I said, briskly. "I shall find plenty to do. For one thing, I can cook good things—" his face brightened. "The doctor thinks you ought to have five meals a day—" a gleam came into his eyes. "And he wants your arm massaged so you can have the use of it as soon as possible. I will go down now to interview the cook." His eyes followed me with the over-affectionate reverence with which a child endows the person who has at his disposal ice-cream or candy. Poor fellow! I suppose he felt just about starved all the time.

As it was pretty near lunch-time I thought I would make myself popular with him right away and bring him something up—the cook said he usually had his meals in his own room. So I broiled a two-inch-thick porterhouse and creamed some spinach and cooked two eggs in a really delicious way. I made cocoa all of milk and just the right kind of buttered toast. And I thought up a nice little sweet with whipped cream; I felt—perhaps because his weakness gave him that puzzled, boyish look—that he must have a

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sweet tooth. And any one who saw the look of beatific satisfaction with which he ate the dessert after he had cleared up every other plate I brought him—the only thing he didn't like was the cocoa—would have felt that the guess was a happy one.

It was after all that, and before he had time to feel hungry again, that he asked me my name.

"Miss Alyson," I had said, when the queer, puzzled look began to come again to his face.

"Alice—" he began, confusedly.

"Alyson," I corrected him.

But by this time he was looking at me with wide-open eyes. And such a—funny look came into them. It was rapturous—but unbelieving and piteously dazed. He jumped to his feet.

"Why—how could I have been so blind! It is you—you came—just when I was writing to you—longing to have you here—"

He came toward me, but I retreated toward the desk, keeping my eyes on him in as cool and professional a manner as I could. Of course, I knew it was only his poor brain that had got tired and his eyes that weren't visualizing right. But—I couldn't help it—it did make me feel—jumpy—that look in his eyes.

"I am Miss Alyson," I said, firmly, "the nurse. And—may I mail that letter for you?" I put

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my hand out for it—I just wanted to bring him back to real things—and couldn't help seeing the address: "Miss Alice Ridgely." That explained why he had got confused in that unexpected way; it was the likeness in sound between "Alice" and the first two syllables of "Alyson." I glanced involuntarily at the girl on the dresser. Was there a resemblance? I believed I could see that the photograph looked a little—in general outline at least—like the last one I had had taken, the one that Mr. Kent thought was so good.

He hesitated, and looked so lost and helpless that I just wanted to pat him, the way you do a big, blundering, faithful mastiff when it doesn't understand what you are throwing the stick in the water for. But I acted as if nothing unusual had happened.

"I think you had better lie down, while I go and settle things in my room a bit. I'll be back in time to bring you up a little lunch at three, and the best thing you can do is to take a nap."

I got him on to a leather couch that looked more comfortable to me than the bed, felt his feet and found that they were cold, put a hot-water bottle under them, and wrapped him up well. That raised his feet a little and his head was low. That, of course, was the reason why

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the haze cleared out of his brain, and he knew perfectly well who I was and wasn't puzzled any more. He gave me perfectly direct and definite instructions about some messages he wanted sent for him. And there wasn't any of the pathetic sort of dependence that had made me feel all at once as if I had known him forever, and had been taking care of him for a long time. He spoke with a quick decisiveness that made me realize that he was the man who had saved his comrade at such fearful odds, the hero that people were talking about as one of the most gallant officers in the service. But when I had to help him to turn over a little to get a more comfortable position, and when he couldn't get his poor stiff arm to his head to push a lock of hair out of his eyes and I had to do it for him, I realized he was going to be pretty dependent for a long time yet.

The next day Mr. Kent came. And until unpleasant things began to happen about Lieutenant Rathbone it was quite as nice as I had thought it would be. Perhaps it was nicer, for you never can quite imagine beforehand the little thrill you feel when you see some one whom you like very much.

I think Colonel and Mrs. Grant must have known something about us—about me, for they

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both seemed rather amused when I came into the dining-room the first morning and was so surprised to see Mr. Kent that I showed it—he had come a whole train earlier than he had said he would. But then, I never knew a time when people didn't brighten up and feel that something interesting was going to happen when Henry Kent came into the room. It's the way he has. They were very kind. And it certainly was the easiest case that anybody ever was on. The only hard thing I had to do was to straighten Lieutenant Rathbone out every little while about my not being Alice. There was an element of suspense about it. But I understood perfectly well how it had happened, because Mrs. Grant, when I said I hadn't met Miss Ridgely because she had come out since I went into training, commented on her looking quite noticeably like me. So, as the case was so easy and everybody was so kind, I had almost forgotten that I had a patient at all—except, of course, when I was on duty. And Henry Kent and I had more time to talk in that one day than we had had for months—in a lump. We had been canoeing up the Charles, when the moment came that I brought Lieutenant Rathbone in his supper and saw that something had gone wrong.

The Lieutenant had been trying to do more

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than usual that day—he had got out some fortification plans to look over—and was overtired. So his poor eyes were very heavy and hazy. Henry Kent had gone right to him as soon as we came in from the river. He was still there, but was walking up and down the room in a suppressed, agitated way that I didn't understand at all, until the Lieutenant looked at me with a tenderness that I would probably have found very appealing under any other circumstances—if I had been Alice, for instance—and said:

“Why did you stay away so long? You know I miss you!”

I didn't pay any special attention to this. I knew that he was just confusing me with Miss Ridgely; and then, anyway, patients are apt to get childishly dependent. I said lightly:

“I am sorry, but it was just the usual time. I wasn't gone more than two hours. But the canoe shipped a good deal of water, and I had to change my shoes. I asked Mr. Kent to tell you.”

He turned on Henry Kent.

“You have been canoeing? With her? And you didn't tell me? You know how it is with us, Hal—I have been telling you about her. It's taking an advantage, I say—when I am laid up here like this!” He gave a glance at his helpless arm that seemed heartrending to me.

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Mr. Kent didn't seem to find it pathetic at all. He just looked more furious than I ever remember having seen any one before. He started to say something that would have been perfectly withering. But then he gave a reluctant look at the patient, realized—I felt it—that he couldn't say it to a sick man, contented himself with throwing a savagely indignant glance at me, and was leaving the room.

"Wait!" I said, and he halted—eagerly. "He just thinks I am—" I was going to say "Miss Ridgely." But I remembered in time that I mustn't tell any one about the patient's mental condition, and finished idiotically—"kind to him."

That seemed to make Henry Kent rabid. He snapped out:

"That helps matters! I know all about the effect your 'kindness' is likely to have on him!" He flung himself out of the room. And that was certainly the most impolite thing any man ever said to me. It hurt my feelings.

As soon as he had gone and it didn't matter, when I had Lieutenant Rathbone settled with a book on the couch with his feet higher than his head, his brain worked all right and he visualized correctly. He knew perfectly well who I was, and asked me to mail another letter he had been

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writing to Miss Ridgely. Although it was irritating that he never would lie down when any caller was in the room, and that this couldn't have happened a few minutes earlier, my heart got lighter again, and I laughed to myself at the tragic, hopeless feeling I had about the situation a few minutes before.

"It can't be anything but a temporary condition at most," I thought. "And perhaps it won't hurt Henry Kent to think there is some one else for a little while. All that will be necessary will be to get the doctor's permission to tell him the truth, and then everything will be straightened out."

But it is all very well to say it is only a temporary condition. The temporary condition you are in is the only thing you can know at one time, and there is nothing to prove that it won't last forever and blast your whole life. The next morning began worse than ever.

They had a long talk together right after breakfast. All that day they were thrown together. Mrs. Grant, who knew that they had always been great chums, naturally thought his visitor would be good for the patient. But if Mr. Kent was good for Lieutenant Rathbone, Lieutenant Rathbone certainly was not good for Mr. Kent. When I went into the room to massage the patient's

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arm—and I did it as early as I could, for I did want to put an end to the dreadful confidences—Mr. Kent's eyes were hot and looked as if he hadn't slept for a week. I suppose it was a hard position, when you come to think about it—to have an invalid telling you things that make you angry, and not be able to say anything back because he is an invalid. But it was so silly of him not to understand me better. So I began to get angry too.

I could remember every little misunderstanding we had had since the day we met, and it seemed to me that they all showed that he really had a very ugly disposition. I did make one effort to set things right when I brought up the mail with a letter in it from Miss Ridgely. I made it conspicuous and handed it to him with quite an air of archness. But he didn't even open his mail; he put it aside indifferently, while he said something about the care I took of him, in a tender way that made me perfectly discouraged. And Mr. Kent probably caught sight of the postmark and inferred whom it was from!

After lunch I did have one glimmer of hope. Mr. Kent took out a cigar and handled it lovingly. Then he asked the Lieutenant if he would smoke. I thought:

“How lovely! If they smoke and I leave the

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room they will be sure to put their feet on the table. Then the patient's feet will be higher than his head, and he will be rational again. And perhaps Mr. Kent will find out the truth." Any one can see how desperate I was to think up anything as complicated as that!

I was just going to say, "I don't believe it would hurt Lieutenant Rathbone a bit," when I remembered that I had no instructions from the doctor to let him smoke. So I had to say that it wouldn't do. But if ever I had to use self-denial to do my professional duty it was then.

When I went to my room that evening a dreadful, hopeless feeling had begun to settle about me. What if the situation must be explained some time? We were growing apart. We were beginning to show to each other the ugly side of our natures—of course *I* hadn't been anything yet but calm and dignified even if he had. Still I could feel myself growing angry, and when you are angry you never know what is going to happen. Maybe it would make such a division that we could never get over it. And even if it wasn't as bad as that, here were two of the five whole days, when we had been going to have such a good time, gone. At the very best it would take one day to get things straightened out. There would be only two days left, and one of

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those the day before he was going to leave, and so spoiled before it was begun. With that I got desperate, and so really began to think how it could be settled.

There was the doctor; of course, the simple thing would be to get his permission to tell Mr. Kent. But suppose he should skip the next day's call!

"I'll call him up and ask him!" I thought. But I couldn't think at that moment of any pretext for consulting him that would not seem far-fetched. And how could I make any man understand why I wanted the matter explained to Mr. Kent? He would be sure to think all sorts of things. If I had to confide in any one, I would rather have it Mrs. Grant. But I had seen so little of Mrs. Grant! She seemed kind and nice, but she evidently was a very busy person. And Mr. Kent and I had not—were not—I mean there didn't seem to be any good reason for my wanting him to know that the Lieutenant wasn't in his right mind when he gave the impression that there was anything sentimental. Oh, I just couldn't see any way out of it that wouldn't use up three whole days in misunderstandings and embarrassments.

By the time I had reached this conclusion it was almost midnight. And you know how

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frightfully gloomy things can look when you are all alone and troubled at twelve o'clock. Everybody's light but your own goes out, and you feel as if the whole world knew you were awake and had deserted you. In self-defense I went to bed and tried to stop thinking. And although I usually go to sleep so soon I can never remember anything distinctly except shutting my eyes, that night I heard one o'clock strike before I went to sleep!

Of course things looked better the next morning. Before breakfast I thought over the situation, and decided that I would first find out whether Lieutenant Rathbone could not smoke, so he would sit with his feet higher than his head and tell Henry Kent how things really were; if that failed I would call Doctor Sturtevant up on the 'phone and ask him if I could not explain to Mr. Kent the patient's mental condition—I thought up several good reasons why this was necessary; if that failed I would try Mrs. Grant. I didn't let myself think at all of the reasons for not doing any of these things. It all seemed very simple. But just wait and see how it turned out!

The day started off favorably. Henry Kent and I had breakfast alone together. Colonel Grant had had his breakfast and had gone to

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keep office-hours; the Grant children never came to the table; they took all of their meals in the nursery, and one got a glimpse of them only now and then. Mrs. Grant sent down word that one of them had a temperature, and that she couldn't leave him just then. So Mr. Kent's face lost a little of its gloom, and I would have had a delightful time pouring his coffee for him and seeing that his eggs were right if we both of us had not had this thing on our minds. The table-talk was humorous, unintentionally so—goodness knows! neither of us was light-hearted enough to say anything funny. First, Henry Kent, after being elaborately general in his conversation, would fix eyes on the table-cloth and remark, "You don't find Eric a troublesome patient, I hope?" in a tone of friendly consideration. Then I would say: "Oh no, although, like all sick persons, he has unreasonable fancies. Do you really find him improved?" This was to lead up to a discussion in which Mr. Kent might accidentally discover the patient's mental condition—of course without my telling him anything. But Henry Kent made entirely the wrong interpretation. He said stiffly, "I suppose it is natural for you to be over-anxious." And that is the way it would go, and I didn't accomplish a thing. What Henry Kent thought he found

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out I don't know—only the breakfast ended in gloom and suppressed bad temper.

So, as soon as he went up-stairs to see his cousin, I tried my first expedient. But it was afternoon before I finally got the doctor on the 'phone, and then his voice sounded hurried.

"Smoke?" he repeated. "He wants to smoke, you say? Well, I don't know that it would hurt him. Wait, though—give me the morning bulletin. Sleep all right? Appetite? That's good; he can hardly eat too much now. Heart-action?—all right. Let him have one cigar a day. Something else, you say? Oh, you can talk about that when I make my call. In a hurry now. I'll be up later in the day. Mrs. Grant has 'phoned me. It isn't anything pressing, is it?" And he rang off before I had time to answer.

I wasn't as much disappointed as I would have been if I had not hoped so much from the patient's smoking. I hurried in to tell them. It was really pathetic to see the way Lieutenant Rathbone fondled the cigar that Mr. Kent gave him. I knew they wouldn't get comfortably settled if I were in the room, so, though it was annoying to feel that, without me to direct the conversation, it might not get around to Miss Ridgely, I made preparations to go to my room

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for a little rest. This was giving up the afternoon I might have had with Mr. Kent—only it wouldn't have been much pleasure to have it, the way he was glowering. So I was sacrificing the present moment for our future good. But the minute I started out of the room Lieutenant Rathbone wheeled around, fixed his eyes on me in the most ardent fashion, and said:

"You are not going to desert me, are you, Al—Miss Alyson? I don't feel strong enough to be left alone this afternoon."

What could any one do? I was his nurse, after all, and I couldn't leave a patient when he said he was not able to be left. So there I sat, on pins and needles, while they wasted the precious life of that cigar! And, just because they couldn't get over being gentlemen, even when it would have been so convenient to me for them not to be, their feet were decorously *planted* on the floor.

After a while I thought the patient's attention flagged a little, and as there was still half of his cigar left, I thought it might be a good plan if I tried, a second time, to make my escape. But as I was going out of one door Mrs. Grant slipped in through the other. Of course they both rose to meet her. His feet were farther down than ever!

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I did begin to feel discouraged. It seemed as if there was a conspiracy against me. But in the quiet of my own room I got hold of myself. The afternoon wasn't gone, and there were the two other ways that I hadn't tried yet. At that moment I heard a tap at the door. It was Mrs. Grant. Her face was flushed.

"I have just come to explain why I won't be able to see you for a long time. I am so worried. My next to the youngest has developed scarlet fever. I can't bear to give him up to a nurse—he is nothing but a baby really—so I have got to go into quarantine with him. I changed my clothes to run out and do a few last errands—the doctor said he would stay with the boy a few minutes. I feel sure that I can leave Lieutenant Rathbone in your hands with safety, but it is hard, having it come just now. While the doctor can't be certain—it certainly looks like scarlet fever—and there has been so much around—"

With that distressed face before me I simply couldn't ask her to tell Mr. Kent about Lieutenant Rathbone then.

"Will Doctor Sturtevant see my patient before he goes?"

"Why, no; I suppose he will have to change his clothes and disinfect before coming into another sick-room—"

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To think of having forgotten that!

"And Georgie isn't strong. I'm so afraid it will go hard with him!"

She was leaving, her eyes full of alarm. So, of course, I had to forget everything else and tell her how light all the cases of scarlet fever were this year.

But when she had gone I was too despairing to move for a moment. My last hope had been taken from me!

The next morning I found the patient much more clear-headed. But the mail brought a bombshell. When I took his breakfast-tray to him he was staring at an open letter.

"What do you suppose I have done?" he demanded. "Here is a letter from her—from Miss Ridgely—"

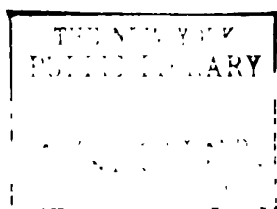
My heart gave a jump. Surely his brain was working better. He knew I was not the other one.

He went on:

"Something I have written has displeased her." He stopped, evidently realizing that he was not just talking to himself. But the next instant something farther on in the letter banished his scruples. "Why, what girl does she mean? What have I been writing? And—she is angry!"



I TOLD HIM ABOUT HIS MISTAKING ME FOR MISS RIDGELY



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He raised a white face to me. He looked positively terror-stricken. It was odd to remember just then how brave he was, that he was a hero. He was so distressed that, although his affairs weren't anything like as sad as mine, I wanted to help him.

"Lieutenant Rathbone," I said, impressively, "please sit down."

He did so mechanically.

"Now put your feet up—that table will do."

He stared at me. But he obeyed meekly.

"Now I am going to explain affairs to you." So I did—that is, I told him about his mistaking me for Miss Ridgely, leaving out all the particulars—and all about Mr. Kent.

"I think I understand," he said, finally. "But surely I am all straight about it now."

"We will see. You are, with your feet up. We will have a lesson now. Put your feet down."

He did so, slowly and cautiously. When they were fairly landed his expression of anxious conscientiousness did not alter. This looked encouraging.

"Now, who are you?"

"Eric Rathbone of the Marine Corps."

"And who is Miss Alice Ridgely?"

"The sweetest girl in the world."

"And what is your relation to Miss Ridgely?"

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"I am going to marry her, Heaven and the Rear-Admiral being willing."

"What is my name?"

"Miss Alys—Alice—" he wavered, and as he looked at me I realized that a less sternly impersonal expression had come into his eyes.

"I will have to prompt—'Miss Aly—son.'" I spoke the word slowly and distinctly.

Without hesitating, he repeated it carefully after me.

"And who am I?" My breath came fast, for this was the crucial point.

"You are the swee—"

"No, I am not!" I interrupted sharply. "Not to you at least. I am your nurse, Nancy Alyson. My name is not Alice, and I am here to make you do what I say. Now repeat that—looking at me."

He began bravely, but stumbled and began to get confused again, and the wrong expression started to come into his eyes.

"Say it without looking at me," I amended, hastily. That he was able to do. "And you really understand that?" I asked him, doubtfully.

"I do—really—back somewhere in my mind." Earnest effort was in his face. "But, you know, when I look at you for any length of time, I begin to get confused, my head goes round—I sup-

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pose it is weakness. But you are so pre—" I frowned and he stopped, puzzled. He reflected, and understanding came to him—"precious like Miss Ridgely," he finished, with an air of conscious and injured virtue on his face.

"Well, I think you have made a fair mark in your examination," I said, with grudging praise. "And I only hope it will last. Suppose—suppose you try telling some one—say Mr. Kent—about Miss Ridgely when he comes in to see you—just as an experiment—to see if you are sure."

"All right." He nodded his head dutifully.

"And then, if your head stays clear for two or three more days and you visualize correctly, we'll see if we can't persuade Doctor Sturtevant that you don't need a nurse any longer—"

"Does that mean that you will go away?" He didn't look properly enthusiastic, so I hastened to say:

"And then perhaps he will let you take a little trip, say to the Berkshires, to see Miss Ridgely—"

The right kind of a glow began to come into his eyes.

"Then sit down now, and write a letter to Miss Ridgely that will make everything right, no matter what you have been saying. Only—I hate to suggest it—but I think you would better

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let me see the letter before you send it, to be sure you don't get anything else in."

He tried to grasp this in his earnest way that made you feel how splendid he was underneath all this passing confusion of the senses.

"I think I would better do that with my feet up, just to make sure. And you can read it when you come in again. I think I can manage it all right. Only—" As he said this he ducked his head like a school-boy, and wouldn't meet my eyes—"We'll put a blotter over—just the beginning and the end. You are sure you don't mind?" He raised his eyes to mine anxiously.

He certainly was the most lovable, big, honest boy—I did hope Miss Ridgely was nice enough for him. But splendid, simple men like that are so often imposed on. I smiled reassuringly.

"No, indeed, I don't mind a bit. In fact, this makes me realize more than ever how very nearly well you are." Then I began to think how I could have Henry Kent spend the hour after lunch with him, and I could come in after the Lieutenant had explained everything, and how we could have a little time for a walk, after all. It all seemed very simple.

I brought the patient's luncheon up rather early. Just as I was going to open the door I stopped. There were queer sounds within—a

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woman's voice For a second I wondered if it were Mrs. Grant. Then I knew it couldn't be. The sounds were of sobbing and laughing and—other things all together. I halted involuntarily and heard:

"And so—and so—I just had to come—"

"You—darling—I haven't had time yet to realize that it's—you. And yet I haven't been doing anything for weeks but watch that door, trying to imagine what it would be to see you coming in—"

"But what *did* you mean, then, about that other—?"

"*Alice!* I can't imagine what made you get such an idea. As if I could—"

"Well, I don't know what you meant. And now I don't care—much. At least I don't when you—"

"All right, I will!" There was the—sound again—and laughter—happy—smothered. So I realized that I mustn't eavesdrop a minute longer.

Miss Ridgely was still standing very near to the Lieutenant when I got my tray and myself into the room. She was so moved that she didn't even pretend that she had not had her head on his shoulder. She gave me one eager glance. Of course it was true that my hair

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wouldn't go up right that day. But still she needn't have looked so reassured, so triumphant. It almost made me want her to see the look that had been in his eyes when he looked at me—just once. But naturally I was glad it wasn't there any more. I did wish that Henry Kent would come in.

In a minute it seemed to me—it really was just while I was being introduced to Miss Ridgely—the room filled up with people, everybody in the house. It was like the way the stage always fills up at the theater at the last, just when everything is going to be explained, and just before the hero and heroine come to the center-front. First Colonel Grant and the doctor came in—they had just finished one game and thought they would have luncheon before beginning another. Then Mrs. Grant hurried in to inquire about the patient, explaining that she had left Georgie for an hour to go out for her airing. While these were greeting Miss Ridgely, all talking at once, Mr. Kent sauntered in, looking sulky and unhappy, but sufficiently—attractive in spite of it all. And there he stayed at the other side of the room, evidently undecided about remaining, not knowing what he had stumbled into. And I realized again how much more I liked wavy, fair hair than brown, and how finely he carried him-

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self, quite as erectly as any military training could have made him, and not so stiffly.

Lieutenant Rathbone and Miss Ridgely were in the middle of the room. Miss Ridgely was getting all flushed, trying to think what reason to give for having come on so suddenly. So I looked toward the patient and caught his eye. I wanted to tell him that he must try his lesson. Miss Ridgely met the glance and frowned. She was one of the black-eyed girls that always make a specialty of vivacity and go out into somber mediocrity when they are not pleased. But I said to the Lieutenant:

"Who is Miss Ridgely?"

He looked perturbed and a little frightened, and automatically sank down into his easy-chair and put his feet up. He didn't quite dare to risk answering with them down, and it was too serious a matter to consider forms then. Miss Ridgely was beginning to be amazed, but her wonder was changed into a very pretty confusion when he said fervently:

"The sweetest girl in the world." And when I saw the lovely tenderness in her eyes and the trembling of the childish lips, I began to like her and to realize how pretty was the little flashing thing.

"Now put your feet down!"

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There was a moment's pause, filled with more sorts of different emotions on the part of more persons than such moments often are. Miss Ridgely's emotion naturally was frozen by a fresh accession of amazement. Colonel and Mrs. Grant waited, suspense on their kindly faces, Doctor Sturtevant came a little nearer and bent forward. Mr. Kent, in bewilderment, came to join him, questions written all over his face.

Slowly, solemnly, the Lieutenant put one foot to the floor—the other. I watched him anxiously.

"*Now!*" You could have heard us, each one, breathing. "Who is Miss Ridgely?"

His eyes sought hers, seriously—oh, so tenderly. "The sweetest woman in the world. And—soon—to be my—wife." His voice went down on the last word to a deep, sweet tone that made us all vibrate to the reverent joy compressed into it. My own voice shook.

"And who am I?"

The long, tense breath that we heard was from Henry Kent.

"The sw—" I coughed to attract the Lieutenant's attention. I must say I trembled in that moment. He caught my anxious eyes, and then his gaze wandered to Henry Kent's rigid face. A gleam came into his own eyes, a blessed little smile of humorous comprehension twitched at

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his lips. "The swiftest little tug that ever pulled a battered hulk into harbor," he finished with the utmost smoothness. From that time I never had any doubt that the patient's mind was working accurately again.

Before I had time to appreciate the relief, Doctor Sturtevant came forward. He turned to me.

"How long has it been since this marked improvement set in?" he asked me.

"It began this morning, about an hour after breakfast."

"Well, of course, there will be an occasional interval of relapse, but I fancy I can give a clean bill of health all the same. And we don't need to trouble this little girl's father with any of the details. Here, Mrs. Grant, I think you had better get her away where she can be quiet." His eyes saw more quickly than one would have imagined. We all turned at the words. Miss Ridgely's face was white, and bewildered tears were coming to her eyes. And we all began to realize what the long strain had been to her and what must be the effect of the utter confusion of this scene. "And I imagine this is as good a time as any to tell her what Rathbone has been through," he added, cheerily.

Mrs. Grant put an arm around the girl to draw her away. I saw Henry Kent talking to Doctor

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Sturtevant. So I knew that everything was being explained and that the best thing for me to do was to get the patient to eat his luncheon. He, too, was looking whiter than he should. So I pulled a little table up to him, and put the tray on it and poured out the cocoa—how he did hate cocoa! And as soon as I uncovered the beautifully broiled chops and some delicious creamed chicken with mushrooms on toast—I had used thick yellow cream for it—he was quite ready for the meal. But just as Mrs. Grant and Miss Ridgely got to the door he called out, with gay mastership in his voice:

“All right—I’ll let you have her now. But just wait. It’s only going to be two months, you know!”

Everybody stopped short and turned toward him. Something of the relief from the nervous tension of the whole perfectly absurd scene got into us all. And with one accord, in a chorus—even Miss Ridgely joining in, in spite of her being as yet ignorant of what it all meant—laughing, guying him, and rejoicing with him in the same breath, we called out:

“Do you say that with your feet down?”

He drew his eyebrows into a frown of burlesque harshness and rapped out grimly:

“With *both* feet down!”

VIII

A MESSAGE

I HADN'T been home from Boston two days before Doctor Dietrich asked me to nurse Miss Terry.

Miss Terry's was the case I had been dreading. You always wince when you know that you are to nurse an incurable; and it takes a very short time to wear you out. If it had been for any one but Doctor Dietrich I think I should have said I couldn't take the case—though that would have been an unfortunate thing for me professionally. As it was, I was selfish enough to suggest that he might send for Miss Stryker—I wonder if that was completely selfish, after all. I knew that Helen had nursed one or two cases for him in the early fall. And then there had been a long time that she hadn't. I couldn't help wondering what had happened and whether it wouldn't be a good idea to throw them together again.

Doctor Dietrich frowned when I spoke of her:

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"She's insubordinate," he said, briefly.

"I'm afraid she isn't very keen for her own interest." I didn't do anything more than glance at him out of the corner of my eye. But he was most unsatisfactory. You couldn't tell anything by the expression of his face—unless the blankness itself meant something.

"Is that what you call it!" was all he said.

"Yes. She has offended Doctor Adams, I'm afraid." I put a whole lot of regret into my voice. "And yet I can't help rather sympathizing with her in that case—"

I thought he was going to ignore that suggestion too. But after a minute he said, unwillingly:

"What did she do to Adams?"

"She had 'phoned for instructions to treat sleeplessness. Doctor Adams told her to give the patient a morphine hypodermic. The girl was neurasthenic—impatient of the least discomfort—always dosing herself—Miss Stryker felt she was just the one to acquire the morphine habit. She refused to give the hypodermic and left the case." Again Doctor Dietrich's face told me nothing. And yet I felt that his words represented the end of a debate with himself when he said, firmly:

"Still, she is insubordinate."

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Miss Terry greeted me with a wearied lifting of her eyelids and a deepening of the irritable line between her heavy eyebrows. From the shadow of the pillow her face emerged with terrible distinctness, a distinctness in which sharpened aquiline features and deep hollows played their tragic part. The spots of angry red upon her cheek-bones were but a heightening of her fierce and bitter aspect.

"I wonder—if you—can lift me up without—prodding your fingers into me—" The husky gasp was pathetic enough, but the spirit behind it roused every ounce of antagonism. And it's so silly to have any antagonism left when one has been nursing over a year.

So I thought it safer to say nothing, but lifted her in silence. She was so weak that she slipped limply down to the bottom of the pillows again. But as soon as she could speak she said:

"You did hurt—and can't you speak? I hate the silent kind."

"I'll do it better next time." I knew that I spoke with the machine-made cheerfulness that isn't a bit like the kind you really feel. She tried to speak again, but the cough interrupted her. When I saw how it racked her and how her pulse raced when the paroxysm was over, I realized that she was very near the end. But,

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as soon as she could speak, she pushed the medicine away that I held to her lips. She gasped, with a frown:

"I won't take that stuff. They give it to tubercular patients. And my complaint's only—bronchitis. That's what Doctor Howard said—years ago— And all the other absurd precautions! Even if it were—tuberculosis—why should I care whether other people get it or not?"

I put the bottle away, and she lay gasping in gloomy silence for a few minutes. Then she said, fretfully:

—"Although I suffer as much as any one possibly could with tuberculosis—more because I'm so strong. The difference is that I shall be well—as soon as this damp weather is over and I can sleep out-of-doors again. Everything is against me—I've had such ignorant doctors. If I had tried the open-air treatment before I would be well now—and the nurses are so clumsy and selfish—"

I busied myself pretending to put the already exquisite room in order. It was a charming place, spacious and airy, and yet not too bare. The screened sleeping-porch opened at a convenient distance from the bed, a pleasant wood-fire crackled and glowed on fine old andirons. It was comfortable, too, for the day was one of

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the cold ones that come sometimes in spring. The tones of the furnishings were restful and yet not too cold; the sunlight was bright outside, and the air tonic. Yet the black melancholy that hung like a cloud over this creature of painfully protruding bones and loose, discolored skin drifted inexorably until it enveloped me.

"Why should I be affected?" I wondered. All was well with me and mine. I had nursed other men and women worn by the woes of the flesh into a sorry simulacrum of fretful childhood. I had always been able to feel that unreasonableness and self-centered fancies were a definite result of disease. But there was a bitter potency in this dying woman that seemed to poison the air. She hurt me.

When Doctor Dietrich made his visit in the afternoon I told him that I could not keep the case. Then I knew how harsh he could be.

"You have some reason, I suppose—or think you have!"

"I seem to irritate her—and it's too depressing."

He looked at me in an amazed silence before he rapped out:

"You have been under the impression that you have chosen a—gay and—invigorating profession?"

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"No, but—"

"I had imagined that I saw in you some beginnings of womanliness—you did some really good work with Mrs. Campbell—and now you're afraid of being 'depressed'!" Words failed him.

"But in the other cases there was hope. And here—to be able to do nothing but—stand by—and see her suffer!" I know it was foolish. But I did prize Doctor Dietrich's good opinion—and the tears came to my eyes. He fidgeted around for a moment, pretending to be indifferent; but I couldn't help knowing that he was too mere a man to be really steeled against tears, even if he did see them so often.

"Oh, bother!" he said, laughing. "I shall have to beg your pardon. And I really haven't time for it. You see, I forget every little while that you are a little girl, after all. You put up such a good bluff occasionally that it convinces me. But I want you to be steady enough to meet this situation. It's the first test you've had. This poor soul has changed nurses too often to be buffeted about any longer. You've got to stay by. Do you know anything of her history?"

"No." I got rid of the last tear and put my handkerchief away.

"Well, I'll give you a little of it—I'm glad she's

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asleep now. If she can get a few minutes' rest she'll be better able to get through the night—"

"But"—I felt a horror of myself as I said it—"Doctor Dietrich, it's so cruel to help her to go through another night. If we went out of her room together and left her to die of neglect it would be much kinder—honestly, that's just the way she makes me feel—since there would be one day less of her torture."

His face weakened—just for a second—into bitter doubt. Then he closed his mouth like a steel trap:

"No! We can see only one inch before our noses—but we march that inch with colors flying! Until the thought of the world has evolved into a general conviction that we are wrong and has made a science of the doubt, we are bound to abide by our orders as sure as any private drilling in muddy roads and bitter wind. It's all shifting and change, but there's got to be something fixed in the midst of uncertainty. And that's will that stands to do what it is pledged to do. We save life—if we can. When we can't, we prolong it, and exhaust knowledge and endurance in expedients to ease suffering. And—oneself!" He dismissed the subject with a contemptuous snap of his fingers. "Do you know how old this woman is?"

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"No."

"Well, nobody else does. But it has been at least twenty years since the last being died upon whom she had any claim of relationship or affection. If it were not for her money she would be forgotten—except by perfunctory charity. As it is, she is delivered over to perfunctory paid service. The connection was a wealthy one, and fortune after fortune has been left to her. She has more money than she knows what to do with. But because the case is hopeless and because her disposition is what it is, one nurse after another has given up the case, and there is hardly a doctor in town that she has not called in and quarreled with. I've been discharged five times, but I pretend I don't know it. I've made up my mind that she shall die with some appearance of affection to smooth her pillow. And I propose to have you—"

"But what can I do that the other couldn't?"

"You've got a gift of facile sympathy and the gift of happiness—both of them absolutely independent of thought, of course—"

I couldn't help gasping at this, and the corners of his mouth twitched. But he went on:

"But all the more valuable. I fancy that's a bigger thing than we reasoning beings have reached with all our thinking. So you're to be

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sunny all the day like a regular Infant-Band-of-Hope-hopeful. You're to find out what will ease the poor soul every instant of the day. What's the feminine intuition that we men are badgered into believing in worth if you can't know this by instinct! That's all any one can do when human flesh is going the way of hers—"

"But, Doctor—what is the use of it all—this life—on these terms?" I suppose it seems queer enough, but, honestly, that was the first time the thought had ever come to me. And I suddenly felt sad and grown up.

"*Child!*" The doctor's voice was odd enough. There was such a mixture of feelings in it that the main one quite escaped me. Then he turned to me with a new consideration: "This"—with a motion of his hand toward me—"and that"—with a motion toward the other room where Miss Terry lay—"are all I have seen. Sound flesh and happiness—diseased flesh and despair. Always flesh. And whatever there may be that can reconcile the two has eluded me—that is, when I am honest with myself. Yet there are men that look as if they had come face to face with—the Great Resolver—but until I see it and am convinced—"

There was the sound of a movement from the other room. As the doctor went toward it I saw

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his eyes. It was the first time I had seen the keen light in them quenched by the mist of dreams.

When I went in to Miss Terry carrying a cup of beef essence she was talking to Doctor Dietrich, and I realized why it was that she had clung to him. A flash of interest that was not vindictive had come into her eyes, a flaring up of personality. The edge of his mind struck sparks from hers—and you could see she had been a clever woman.

"Your nourishment, Miss Terry." I smiled as brightly as I could. Since "sunshine" was my strong point, I turned on quite a glare of it. But the patient ignored her cue. She omitted to be illuminated.

"It's too soon," she said, cross at the interruption. "You persecute me. I have an excellent appetite for meals at respectable intervals. But not every half-hour. Besides that, you don't make it right—"

"It's really an interesting problem," Doctor Dietrich put in, quietly, "this question of how far one can combat the inroads of disease by building up tissue. The body's a grand old fighting ground, and a scrap is one of the best things I know." While he was laughing she reached out her hand for the cup. I lifted it

A MESSAGE

to her lips, and she swallowed the broth. "It's to be raw eggs next time, Miss Alyson, two of them." I don't know just what was the tonic influence that Doctor Dietrich wielded. He had a plain, common-sense attitude of expecting you to do the sensible thing, with no blinking the truth and no heroics. And he had a way of suggesting some entirely impersonal topic meantime which—his manner seemed to say—was of real interest to intelligent beings, while the matter of the body—one's physical or mental aches—was relatively a detail.

When I followed him from the room to get my instructions I couldn't help saying:

"But, Doctor Dietrich, is it *right* to keep up the illusion? Ought she not to know that she has tuberculosis and not bronchitis—and that the end cannot be far off?"

"My good, fussy little girl," he said, lightly. "You have the rudiments of a Puritan conscience—with no geographical excuse for it, and a germ of feminine nagging! She *knows*. And she knows that we know. But she prefers to shelter herself behind a screen of decent reserve. There are those who like to go about in emotional undress. But not Miss Terry. It's right that she should fight against the mere admission. And it's right that we should fight—to the verge.

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That is one of the human instincts that we can't go back of. Which one of us would arrogate to himself wisdom to say when the end should be? Laws have to be observed even when one is both priest and sacrifice. Who knows for what her life has been prolonged these barren, struggling years?"

I feel that I never got very near to Miss Terry. But we worked out a fairly comfortable working-principle of existence. She was usually prickly and combative and dissatisfied. But the indomitable spirit underlying her crossness became apparent to me, and I grew to take a certain pride in it.

I think something about me hurt her. She had a way of shutting out the sight of me with her hands, and once I heard her breathe a sigh of relief when I had left the room, and it was only once or twice that I caught a softer, wistful glance. I tried to tone down my voice, I wore cloth slippers to deaden my steps. But, in some way, I felt that I often brought her pain.

Yet at first she surprised us all by gaining. There were fewer paroxysms of coughing, and they were less violent; she breathed more freely; she even seemed to be gaining flesh. We met the improvement in various ways. Doctor

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Dietrich made much of it; I began to wonder if the miracle had happened and the lungs had healed; Miss Terry was defiantly triumphant.

But the change for the worse came just as quickly. A hemorrhage from the lungs undid what had been gained and put an end to hope. There were two weeks of piteous days and worse nights. Then Doctor Dietrich said that I could not hold out unless we had a night nurse.

"Whom would you like to have work with you?" he asked, casually. It seemed to me that something more than Miss Terry's case wore on the doctor in those days; he had a hunted, harried look, and he was more absent-minded than ever. He had made no suggestions; but when I said that I would like to have Helen Stryker he didn't look surprised.

When Helen came Miss Terry had reached a point where endurance seemed impossible. She could sleep only by opiates—and she fought opiates. It was all but impossible for her to swallow. It seemed as though if, for one instant, the determination to live should leave her, she would flicker out before the next difficult breath. And one hoped she would. Still she held on. When she could no longer dispute or oppose with words, a movement of the hand or head registered the action of her will. When

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strength for that failed a spark from the unconquerable eyes left us in no doubt.

I took Helen into the room. Miss Terry, who was lying facing the door, glanced at her with more complete indifference than one often sees. In response Helen picked up a pillow and wedged it in at the sick woman's back, just under the shoulder-blades. It must have been the spot where the wearing sick-bed ache was worst, for there was a flicker of relief in the cold, bright eyes.

I glanced at Helen as she went about her soft-footed preparations for the night. There was something in her face that drew me—something magical. It was not that her eyes were either bright or soft. It was rather that they were composed and expectant. A hush was about her—a hush that seemed due to the press of many emotions, not to the absence of them. I wondered what it all meant—realizing vaguely that everything in her made for power. The sick woman's terrible eyes followed her about the room. When Helen came to sit beside the bed, their unquiet brightness was stilled to a twilight restfulness, and so they clung.

I'm afraid that I rather hung around until Doctor Dietrich made his last visit for the day. It seems heartless that, in the midst of the shadow

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under which we three had met again, I still had interest to spare for anything else. But I might just as well admit that I was curious about Helen and Doctor Dietrich—of course any one would guess that, whether I admitted it or not. I suppose it's the worst thing about nursing that it does breed callousness—that is, if it is callous to realize that the issues of the living world are important, even by the very side of death. After all— isn't it what the whole world is doing?—going on with its daily affairs, ignoring the desolation that lies all about? Life may be separated from death by one wall instead of many, or only by the invisible but more inexorable wall that hedges about personality, yet the separation is just as complete.

"You are here?" Doctor Dietrich said, as he entered. Their eyes met, steadily, quietly. In the silence I felt that there was both query and response, that some source of discord had been forever stilled.

I handed him the chart. He ran over the entries with no comment save one of his quick nods. What comment could there be where every detail showed the expected step downward—infinitesimal, like the vital spark of the suffering woman, but inexorably down?

He stood looking silently down at Miss Terry,

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who had dropped into one of the tiny intervals of unconsciousness that had taken the place of consecutive hours of sleep. There was no sound but the dragging, rattling sound of her breathing. Nothing save that sound carried any impression of life.

"Good lines, fine proportion," said the doctor, meditatively. "She must have been a beautiful woman once." No one could imagine the horror of that analysis before the terrifying ugliness of that sunken, death-like face. I looked up in surprise, it sounded incredibly callous for Doctor Dietrich. But Helen had her eyes on his face, watching. You could feel her expectancy.

"And yet," he finished, bitterly, "statesmen grow hysterical when the census returns fall off!"

The suffering woman gasped, clutched at the air—was awake. As she struggled to consciousness we could almost see the sharp pang that seized her in the attempt to raise a bony hand to her side, the chattering teeth.

"Pleurisy pain?" asked the doctor, in the rich, tender monotone he used when his sympathies were most keen.

A flutter of the eyelids brushed mere pain away:

"I—have—had—such—happy—dreams," she whispered, with minute-long breaks between the

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words. We could see that she was trying to smile. I fancied that a tremor passed over the doctor's firm lips. Helen put her hand before her eyes, and I—oh, I *never* have any sense—I *always* cry.

"Fine, fine." The doctor moderated the vigor of his voice, not to hurt her weakness. "And the nourishment—really a fair quantity—and well digested."

An enigmatic, gentle smile fluttered on the white lips. It was dreadful to have Miss Terry so gentle—I would have been so glad to hear her scold!

The doctor was putting on his coat. "You understand," he said, under his breath, to Helen. "There will probably be another hemorrhage—that may mean the end. And it may come to-night. I think this cannot last much longer." Helen had her eyes on him. There was no antagonism—but there was no surrender. You couldn't doubt as you saw that level look that he was the most important thing in the world to her. And yet—everything seemed locked up pending something. "What?" I found myself asking of myself.

"Miss Alyson has been so devoted—she is so fond of you—" He was bending over Miss Terry as he spoke. "She is quite tired out and

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needs a night's rest. I have insisted on it. But I leave you in capable hands." Now the thoughtfulness—according to the speech—was all for me. And yet the irrepressible ring of pride and confidence in the moderate last words, the lingering over one word, the slurring over another, the melody that somehow got into his utterance—I imagined that even Miss Terry caught it, for the same flickering smile touched her lips. At all events, as the door closed after him she raised her heavy eyelids and looked full into Helen's face.

"Dying, I salute thee," somehow the remembered words drifted into my mind. Helen put her strong arms about her and lifted the poor body into a more comfortable position. There was no smile on her face, but a tender calm that was—I felt it myself—a healing thing to feel.

Some moments later I came back to leave some strychnine pills. Miss Terry was again dozing. Helen sat by the bed, her head on her hand, her eyes on the fire:

"Nancy," she said, putting out her hand to detain me as I brushed by her, "have you ever found it—the thing that can justify?"

"Justify?" I asked, startled.

She thought for a moment. "The force that

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rises in us to tell us that, in spite of all, life is good—the voice that urges us to take it—for ourselves—for—for others—even in the face of—this?” I did not need the slight motion of her hand to tell me what she meant.

“I don’t know,” I stammered; “but, of course, there must be.”

“Why?” she said, not moving.

“Why—I feel it. And—then—without it—everything would be mockery. And so there must be—something.”

“And is that enough for you, Nancy?”

“Isn’t it enough for you, Helen?”

“No, except that it satisfies you, dear. And that it has made you the lovely thing you are.” And she parted my hair—the sweetest, gentlest touch—and kissed me.

It was in the dense hour before daybreak that Helen roused me. The hemorrhage had come. I helped with the morphia hypodermic and the ice, and rang for a maid to ‘phone for the doctor. I shall never forget the silence and the inexorable gurgling sound.

Soon after the doctor got there the flow of blood was checked. But the pulse could hardly be felt. The patient could not raise a finger; she was in an almost complete state of collapse.

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We worked desperately, rubbing the limbs, placing hot-water bottles at the feet and around the body, giving injections of brandy and strychnine, watching the effect of ammonia and ether. The pulse became fainter and fainter and more and more irregular.

"We'll try salt-water injection." The doctor's low voice in Helen's ear sounded startling.

"Shall I 'phone for—?"

"I brought it with me—out there—" A jerk of his head toward the sitting-room adjoining.

Beyond a quiver as the sharp needle pierced the flesh under her breast, Miss Terry gave no sign of life. Death itself was not so deathlike as her still, sunken face on the pillow. As the water began to course into the veins to take the place of the lost blood, the action of the heart became sensibly stronger.

"Good!" breathed the doctor, between set teeth.

We watched in silence, the doctor's hand on her pulse, Helen with the hypodermic needle in her hand, I chafing the feet.

"It's weakening." We both knew what Doctor Dietrich was going to say before he spoke. He gently laid the hand he held over the other.

"The end will be soon." He spoke under his breath. And there was grief in his tones.

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He stood aloof, watching the emaciated face, the motionless body. It seemed to me that there was defeat and gloom in every line of him—gloom and resentment. I did not exist for him—not even Helen.

The recurring sounds of the woman's breath, quick and shallow now, and with the ominous rattling; the whisper of a feather of wood-ash as it slid to join its fellows in the bed of the fire; otherwise—silence. There was nothing else—existence was suspended—there was no time.

And yet, to me, the air was full of sound. There was ringing in my ears, the clash and clang of mighty forces, liberated, unmasked. I put my hands to my ears to shut them out.

There was a smothered sound from Helen—her eyes were on the sick woman. Miss Terry was sitting up. Her eyes were open.

We had no time to exchange glances with one another. I am sure Helen and the doctor were impressed with the same influence that was on me—a sense of something impending, something that had opened those heavy eyes, brilliant now, yet hardly with fever, blazing with a great, reanimating certainty.

"Lawrence!" She said it once with a ringing voice. "Lawrence!" Her voice had sunk to a whisper, almost inaudible, and yet more full of joy.

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There was a pause while the seeing eyes took their fill of something that was before them. "Love!" she said, with quietude. And as she spoke she put out her hands with a little, cuddling motion—and fell back. And if I live a long, long life, and it is full, every instant, of all the happiness I can now imagine, I can never crowd into it the glory of the joy that filled her face.

I don't know how long it was before we realized that she was dead. Doctor Dietrich was the first to move. He drew the covering over the face. But the action was an unconscious one. His face was full of living thought.

He stood for a moment, strained to his full height, breathing deep. Then his eyes found Helen's.

"The heathen that sat in darkness have seen a great light.'" There was too much wonder in his tones for them to be merely tender. And yet I know the awe that filled him was part of his love for her.

It was then that he went to her and took her hand to lead her from the room. I couldn't help seeing that—and they didn't want me to help it—if they thought of me at all.

"We can never doubt—oh, we will never doubt—the message was for us!" The break in Helen's

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voice was still from wonder. But at the threshold of the door he put his arm around her, and she put both her hands into his other hand with a movement that made me gasp—it was so like.

Of course, I attended to the necessary details—telephoning and all that. After that was done there was a pause before Miss Terry's lawyer came. I sat by the hearth down-stairs, where the logs were laid for lighting, but there was no fire. And when I heard the murmur of voices overhead—even at that distance full of content; and when I remembered—or let the picture of it come before my eyes—for I could not forget—the beauty of satisfaction made eternal in the still face in the quiet room—I— Never in my life before had I felt so much—alone.

IX

THE ISLAND

WE went up to Maine almost a month earlier than usual; we were settled in our camp two weeks before any one else came. I know now that the family were worried about me; Doctor Dietrich had advised them to get me away where the air was more tonic.

Now, I can understand what a queer state I was in. But then, I thought that I was just beginning to find out what life really was. I quite congratulated myself on having probed right through to the heart of everything, and it made me go around in a state of nerves and gloom that must have made me a trial to the whole family connection. But I called it "growing up."

They let me alone a great deal—also by Doctor Dietrich's suggestion. But father sent me up a new canoe. It was the loveliest green, and the speediest in camp. I named it the *Afterme*. And after that came you couldn't hire me to stay on land.

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So, after a week of it—air of vigor and fragrance, pine-essence-soaked—after long days of waves and sunshine and sun-shot green—with every growing thing just tumbling up to make up for the cruel winter—I began to feel that there was a gleam of hope on my own horizon. You see, it had been a pretty hard winter. I had had a succession of hard cases, with Miss Terry's as the climax, and I had been doing some hard thinking and a bit of feeling on my own account. So I found at last that instead of being able to throw things off as soon as I left a case everything began to come back and haunt me. Every single sad thing I knew began to loom up and fill my thoughts until I couldn't imagine that there was anything else. Oh! it was horrible to feel like that.

Even after I began to be more like myself, so I could realize there really was something in life but horrors, they all came back to me—Mrs. Maloney's torn hands and dumb suffering, poor old Doctor Tayloe's tremulous age, Mrs. Campbell's hopeless fight, Miss Terry—over and over—the cycle from birth to death and back again—every instant my thoughts groaned it all over again.

But by the time I felt pretty independent alone in the *Afterme* the pain and the horror of it all

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had died insensibly away. Instead of the torn hands I remembered the ineffable happiness on Mrs. Maloney's face when I laid the baby in her arms. It was the dauntless courage of Helen Campbell that haunted me, not the vision of her poor, dead, marred face—I heard the elemental, deathless crooning of the Earth Spirit in the love duet there at the German tailor's—I saw only the eternal triumph in Miss Terry's smile—

Still, as it whirled around—the tremendous cycle—ceaselessly whirring through my thoughts, although I caught glimpses of the beauty, I asked myself always: "Why?" Why did the world go on suffering—just because it insisted on feeling? Would it not be better never to let oneself feel a throb of emotion, and so escape it all, the penalty of joy as well as the rack of pain?

I know now that it was because I had been thrust into the thick of other people's living that I felt so—pushed into a tumult of emotion before I had grown to it. After all, I thought sometimes with a catch of my breath, it was not the vision of *my* lost lover that brought the tears to think of—it was not the lyric of my simple loving that Herman and Leah chanted—it was not my baby that lay under the blue light of Mrs. Maloney's Irish eyes. And so, in spite of everything, I wasn't grown up at all—I got

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younger and younger with every day—I was back almost to short dresses. After all—my life still waited for me—if I only cared to take it up—

—At last—one day when the wind blew straight from Eden—when the little blue waves curled their white feathers and the *Afterme* danced with them and my heart danced with them both—and I pulled my boat up on the crisp, white sand—and flung my arms wide to the sea and the heavens—and—knowing there was no one to hear and not caring if there had been—shouted at the top of my lungs—louder than the pounding of the waves and the calls of the sea-gulls—then I knew at last that I was alive! That I was willing to take up the life that lay before me. Willing? No—waiting—*longing!*

But that was the day I first found my island. And I mustn't get ahead of my story, but tell it—just as I had been seeing the wild roses blush into being—in Nature's own good time.

It was a very special island. The nose of the *Afterme* bumped into the little beach one day when I was paddling about in a pleasant sort of brown study. So I gave another stroke that sent her well up the shore and jumped out.

On the day of discovery I felt as if something were going to happen. And when I had pulled the *Afterme* up the one patch of sandy beach that

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wouldn't scratch her terribly, and made her fast, and scrambled up the rocks, my heart began to beat rapidly.

To begin with, from the bay nobody would have imagined that the island was different from the others that were scattered around. There were just the rocky ribs stretching down into the water, the patches of gray-green that looked like sere grass from the water, but were really moss and scrubby bushes, and a bit of forest at one end, worn jauntily like a bunch of aigrettes. I made for the trees. At the top of the heaped-up boulders they brandished their arms at me forbiddingly—gaunt arms that had yet been granted a sort of grace and dignity from the hanging mist of gray moss that swathed them, hiding hollows, suggesting curves, accentuating the beauty of mere line and proportion—ghosts of veiling shrouding dowager trees.

I halted—a puff of wind came—every dowager extended an intrepid arm, hanging sleeves of silvery gauze dangling in my very face.

"Well, you nice old things!" I said aloud. "I like your spirit—I wouldn't let any intruding slip of a young thing in, either!" Gnarled gray-brown hands coquettishly drew their veils before their faces. I tried to push past them—spiky fingers caught my hair. I paused, discomfited.

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"Dear ladies!" I said, softly. "Will you—of your grace? I am young and you are old. You know what's beyond—I wish to. And I'll guard your secret—indeed I will—unless you yourselves are willing to have it shared."

There were a stir and murmur of consultation, a swish and tumult of debate. I waited. There came a gust; slant lines of draperies rustled aside. And I went in.

There wasn't a path. My heart beat faster as I pleased myself by imagining that no one had been there before. At least there wasn't a cracker-box or ginger-ale bottle in sight. There were just ranks on ranks of somber trees, the younger sisters of the sentry group, the clean, springy floor of needles, nothing rank, nothing weedy; instead, the good tonic austerity of the northern forests, pine and balsam in the air, and the salt tang through all. For a time there was nothing louder than the far-away pounding of the waves except the padding of my own feet, and a whisper as each group in front of me bent to consult and waved arms in dignified consent.

Then I heard another sound, the murmur of a tiny stream. It seemed hardly to be believed, and I stood still to listen. For a minute I lost it; it was drowned by the onrush of a heavier

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sea upon the shore. Then the sound came again, and, half knowing what it would be, I hurried forward to meet it.

The spring was on the farther side of the miniature forest; the grove opened to inclose a level space. It was all fresh and green. Around the spring was a ring of deep moss and plummy fern; beyond it was a tangle of bushes and brakes; wherever the rock was hollowed out enough to have gathered a handful of soil, scarlet bunch-berries were bedded in their own green leaves—I had always loved to play with bunch-berries when I was a child.

But the spring! The water seemed so marvelously sweet as I drank from the cup of my hands; the placid welling-up of its brimming circle so noiseless beside the steady drone of the sea; the leap of its green-bordered outlet down the rocks so eager; the time so short before its tiny sweetness was lost in the vast salt. It all set me dreaming. It seemed like something within myself, something that veiled itself before the clumsy footsteps of the mind, that shrank with fear at the light and yet clamored to be free, until I felt that any one looking at the spring with me must know infallibly what that thing was, must read its mysterious murmur as I could not. It was then that I realized

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that the reason it all seemed so familiar was that it was the scene of my dream, the dream that had come to me again and again. Only here there wasn't the fire—and the queer thrilling fear.

I didn't care to go there again—not then. Yet it was lovely somehow to have the island at the bottom of my consciousness during the weeks before Mr. Kent came.

It was not that I had been saving my island to show to Mr. Kent. But after I found it there wasn't any one I wanted to share it with until he came.

"We may not be able to get home to tea," I said, on that first afternoon. I was waiting, paddle in hand, for Mr. Kent to take his seat.

"Oh, don't stay so long. I am never really happy about you when you are in a canoe." Mother tried to get the usual anxiety into her speech. But her mind was on the bridge appointment that she was late for. It was a contest that ran on indefinitely, with a four that had played its first rubber ten summers before—and never, by any chance, admitted a new member. So the anxiety wasn't a great success.

"This is not the place for canoes." My

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brother Ned's disapproval as he made this stock speech was not as effective as it might have been did he not take the second Miss Reynolds out every morning after breakfast and every evening to see the sunset. This, too, was a game that had been taken up every summer since Ned's sophomore year at Harvard.

"All depends on the wind and tide, Mrs. Alyson." Mr. Kent's paddle slipped into the water with his easy, accustomed stroke. "We may have to make for harbor somewhere."

"It isn't hygienic to miss regular meal-times, is it, Nancy?" This was Ned's thrust at me because I had bored every one so during my training at Densmore. But as he spoke his eyes were directed meaningly under the seat. And my face began to burn—for, to tell the truth, I had slipped down to the *Afterme* before any one else and put a box of lunch there. And I knew the corner of it must be poking out. I waited for Ned to proclaim it—feeling embarrassed, though I am sure I don't see why I should have been so; nobody ever stirred at Berwick without having food within reach. But I suppose they might have thought I wasn't quite frank about it this time—and it takes so little to make an enormous joke at a place like that. But for once Ned contented himself with an elder-

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brotherly shake of the head. So, as we pushed off, I wondered whether the affair with Miss Reynolds was really serious, after all.

It was all right for a few minutes, and almost what I had imagined it would be. The paddles went in rhythmically to a tune that I seemed to remember. We headed across the bay and skirted Hen Island. And then I realized that I ought to be tactful and get him to talk about the things he was interested in. So I said over my shoulder:

"Have you seen Helen and Doctor Dietrich?"

He nodded impatiently. "I suppose they would have it that they're 'happy.' I know they're everlastingly uninteresting. I dined with them last Thursday. Marriage has absolutely spoiled Dietrich." Really Mr. Kent's expression was savage.

"I think they're dear, both of them—and so happy."

"Oh, I suppose so. But they have a way of making you feel—rather out of it." This time he looked at me squarely. I could see by turning around. And that seemed to make the red creep slowly to his face, even behind his ears. And I had only begun to notice him when I felt my face begin to grow hot too. And it was foolish—and so unjust that he should make me

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feel uncomfortable, when there wasn't anything to feel uncomfortable about, that things began to go wrong. I gave a too-deep stroke with my paddle.

"Look out!" he called, in an entirely different tone—quick, and impatient. "What are you doing? You just have to paddle. I guide!"

"You're heading out too much." I knew perfectly well that my stroke had taken us too near the shore. But he had no right to speak to me that way!

He set his chin in the hatefulest manner. "I'm guiding! There! Do you see?" Of course I couldn't help seeing the jagged rock we had grazed! It was stupid to ask it.

"If we had kept on and not churned around in the water we would have gone clear."

He didn't say anything, but looked away from me absently—as if he hadn't heard what I was saying. And that made me indignant. Before I noticed it I was paddling dutifully again. And the sun began to blaze down on us. Then I observed that he had on just the sort of green tie that they had been having in the shop-windows before I left home. And it was so stupid of him to wear that kind of a tie. He had the skin that freckles, and there were four big ones on his nose already. And he was warm

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and his hair began to look stringy, and that made it look thin—and it really is thick. So I began to wonder why I had imagined it would be nice to have him up there—he was so different from the one I had been thinking about. And I winced when I thought of the island. Drops of perspiration began to trickle down his face. If there is anything that makes me uncomfortable it is to have any one get so unbecomingly and disgustingly warm. The worst of it was he didn't seem to feel a bit embarrassed, but just laid down his paddle and began to wipe his face—positively with gusto! It made me so unhappy to see him that I wanted to make him unhappy.

"Isn't it queer what a test out-of-doors is—in every way? I have seen girls"—I didn't want to make it *too evident* I meant him—"that were beautiful by gaslight that one couldn't *stand* in 'a boat."

"I suppose so," he said, indifferently. "I never thought about it." Were his gray eyes looking out to sea or at me? It was certainly at me. And then I suddenly remembered how my nose had been peeling steadily ever since I came to Berwick, and that that afternoon I had tried to hide it with cold-cream and with powder on the top of that. Evidently the horrid

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red, shiny skin had rubbed through, and he was thinking about it. Undoubtedly he was, from the uneasy expression on his face. But he seemed to think he had to say something to keep up the conversation. "Fortunate, isn't it, that men don't have any beauty to lose? Simplifies things so."

Then there was a long time that I wasn't conscious of anything but a great, bitter wave of disappointment. Here was I who had been thinking for weeks about having Mr. Kent to do all the things with that had seemed so empty when I did them alone. And now that he had come he was simply unbearable—absolutely ordinary-looking, callous, impervious to all the beautiful things around us, getting too warm and mopping his brow like a day-laborer—at the same time he was criticizing my own nose to himself and practically telling me about it. To prevent him from knowing what a blight had fallen over everything I began to be interested in the islands.

"Can you make out the hog on that island?" I asked, brightly.

"Please don't tell me I have got to waste minutes of this heaven-sent day looking for a hog, a hen, a cow, a goat, or the upper, lower, smaller, or greater edition of any barn-yard

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denizen. The paucity of imagination up here! Not a soul on the boat was doing anything else." He turned to me. "I really had another object in coming up here."

"It is a good place to rest," I said, politely, noticing that although his teeth were white, they were uneven. And I felt that, after all, he had come to Berwick only to get braced up for his winter's work—theorist, inhuman, always thinking of the class and never of the person. He stopped, laid down his paddle—took a long breath.

"Do you know what that object was, Miss Alyson?" His manner was so stiff and formal that it seemed antagonistic.

"No," I said, as forbiddingly as I could, too out of sorts to care what he meant. "What was that? A rock?"

He flushed, bit his lips. "I suppose I moved my foot," he said, curtly.

He paddled for a time in silence. Then he wiped his face with his upraised arm. "I want to land," he said, doggedly. "There's something—"

"But we're not there!" I cried, in dismay.

"'There'? Where?"

I'm sure any one would have been vexed enough at being taken up like that and being

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made to appear to have planned things, to have said as I did, "Why, back at Berwick."

He looked so discomfited that I began to have some human feeling again. "Perhaps—" I had said, when he spoiled it all by spying the lunch-box. I saw his eyes on it before he spoke.

"But surely we don't have to head back now—you brought some supper?"

"That's not supper—it's just a lunch. People get so hungry here." I could have killed him! At the same time I wanted to cry. What children we were—and the beautiful moments going!

"I'm going to land," was all he said. He began to turn around the shore of Hog Island, looking for a landing-place—*Hog Island*, when I had expected— And he didn't say a word either. Of course he was thinking that he had found out that I had prepared supper and had *planned* not to get back. He showed very plainly that he thought it—and that he was embarrassed.

When he had found a landing and had jumped out he held out his hand to help me. "I'm hungry," was all he said.

I couldn't have replied to save my life. He walked on ahead without turning his head back once. I always hated Hog Island—it is the least interesting of any of them. I followed on like an Indian squaw, while he looked around

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for a place to eat. He hit on a horrid spot, I thought. You could see the whole bay from it, of course, but it was sunny and windy both. I produced the lunch-box without a word. He was looking studiously away from me and rolling his sleeves down uneasily.

"Will you have a sandwich?" I asked him, indifferently.

"Thank you. What have you?" His tone was so formal it was silly.

"Chicken and lettuce." He took a lettuce sandwich, and we munched away in constrained silence. And I had taken ever so much pains with the mayonnaise—and it isn't easy to put up a lunch like that at Berwick without having any one know. No one but ourselves could possibly imagine how stupid it was. And I had thought of it as being so different!

"Got anything else?" This was after he had eaten *one* sandwich—when he had said he was hungry!

"Cake and fruit." I know Queen Eleanor must have used the same tone when she offered Rosamond her deadly alternative.

"I'll take some fruit, please." I had *made* the cake—baked it in a tin oven on a blue-flame oil-stove, after the others had gone to bed the night before!

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There was another period of perfunctory masticating, while he looked constrainedly out to sea. When he had finished a pear he wiped his hands carefully on his handkerchief and looked at me a minute as if he had something he wanted to say. But I must have been looking pretty cross—I know I felt it. And I couldn't bear to have anything said—there. At all events all he did say was: "I'm thirsty. Where's a spring?"

That was my time of triumph. "There isn't any spring on this island."

"But you have a cup there?"

"You remember I didn't expect to land here. I brought it for a spring I know—"

"Back at Berwick, I suppose." His tone was too resigned to be gloomy. I nodded—only just enough to make him stop questioning—not distinctly enough to make it really a fib; and, anyway, I hadn't been *sure*.

When we had finished this banquet he arose and began to stalk down to the shore again—or rather to clamber down over the rocks in a manner that would have been stalking on level ground. He helped me in silence into the canoe. He headed her back to Berwick.

"I'm afraid it will be harder going back." I was particularly cordial to hide the feeling I had that the sky and the water and the islands

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were turning a somersault. He gave a few muscleless strokes. Then he stopped, glanced at me, reversed his paddle. "Tide setting out, and wind too. Don't believe we can make it—now."

"But we've got to make it." Of course the afternoon was young yet, and the wind would probably drop at sunset. But I felt that I couldn't bury the day in the solitude of my own room too quickly.

He turned from looking at the sky and faced me squarely. And he set his chin. "I'm going on."

"Very well." I spoke with the utmost courtesy. I hate disputes. And then it wouldn't have been any use.

I paddled in silence. Every topic I brought up he disposed of in monosyllables, and every topic he started fell dead. And the water was a little choppy, so there wasn't much time, anyway, for talk.

"Where are you going?" I asked at last, drearily.

"That island over there." He waved his paddle toward the left. It was my island! That was all that was needed!

"I don't want to land," I said.

"We're going to."

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"I don't want to scratch up the *Afterme*. She's just been painted."

"I propose to consider myself of more importance than the *Afterme*—"

"That's silly of you. It's only that she's easier to hurt—"

"Is she? I'm not so sure—"

It was hard work making the landing. It had been growing rough. The water was lower than it had been the day I was there; the patch of sand I had marked in my mind was 'way up-shore; the rocks below were treacherous. Every time we sent her in a vicious wave came along and threatened to grind her nose on the rocks. At last Mr. Kent brought her alongside a shelf of rock and jumped out, holding on to her side. But he slipped on the seaweed and let go, so he had to wade out to get us again. Then he pulled her up to the best landing-place he could find; but as I got out a stone turned under my foot and I went into a nice little pool lying between the rocks. I got my feet and the bottom of my skirt wet. And he didn't know it or care—I will really have to be honest and say that was the way it seemed at the time. For he did ask me if I had got my feet wet, but it was in such a perfunctory way that I said, "No." I didn't want any sympathy.

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I tried my best to get in front of him as we scrambled up the rocks. I couldn't bear to have him find the spring first. He didn't give the old dowager trees a second look (and they had *nothing* to say to me), but strode on ahead to hold the boughs back so they wouldn't slap back in my face. One of them did hurt me, but I wouldn't tell him. He went on and I followed.

We were almost upon it, when I began to notice a strange burnt smell in the air. There were shreds of floating ash everywhere. I brushed one off my hand and it left a trail of smut. And it was growing hot—or else it was because Mr. Kent was tearing ahead so. I was just wishing he would stop—but I wouldn't ask him—when I heard his voice, quick, warning:

“Nancy! Stay back!”

Of course I wouldn't pay attention to that, so I pushed forward. And when I reached his side he said:

“After all—there's no danger—the wind's the other way.”

We stood and looked into my little secret trove together. And for a long time I couldn't understand what was the matter at all.

There was no more green. The spring had dried up. Around it ferns were brown and

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crisped. The springy moss that cushioned boulders, and the deep-green moss that had carpeted tree-roots and marked the course of the little stream, were alike brown and dry. The poor little red bunch-berries were shriveled. There was no further sign of havoc except that puffs of gray smoke were curling upward here and there. And on one of the farther trees was a charred black ring.

"What is it?" I had hardly asked it when a sudden tongue of fire ran up the trunk of a tree not five feet away. I screamed—I must have run to him—I was in his arms—he drew me away—I was trying to shut out the sight with my hands—and he was kissing them—trying to draw them away.

"You don't understand," I cried. "Let me go! It's my island! I'm frightened. It's like a dream I have had so often—and there is always the creeping, hidden fire—and the charred rings—and the puffs of smoke—and then that leaping flame—like Brünnhilde's fire-ring. And always when I have dreamed that I have waked in fright!"

Then came a voice in my ear, muffled because his lips were on my hair: "I've known it too—fire—creeping fire—hidden—eating out. And then the leaping flame! But—oh,

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Nancy—that's joy! Isn't it joy to you? Tell me—"

"How can you do that?" I sobbed. I felt—oh, dreadfully. But his voice sounded different—sure.

"Tears only add fuel. Don't you know that, Nancy—where's your woodcraft? The way to fight fire is with—fire."

"Let me go!" I was angry now and let him see it.

"Why?" He sent the question right into my ear.

"I was frightened—"

"I know it—and you came to me—"

"That doesn't mean anything—I'd have come—to any one—" The voice hesitated for a moment, and then he said:

"Don't believe it! And, anyway, you'll never get another chance."

"This isn't right—it isn't the way I thought—"

"Then you knew it was coming. You deserve to be punished, then, for what you've made me go through—"

"Oh—don't—I only meant I thought you might—say something—it isn't the right way—"

"What difference does the way make? If you knew how glad I am it's over!"

"But it isn't over—*nothing*—"

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"I'm glad you think it's nothing—neither do I—just wait!"

"You won't understand—I haven't said anything— You haven't— Nothing has been said."

"Lots more satisfactory to have something done."

"I—want to—talk this matter over—quietly and calmly." I spoke that time with emphasis so he would know that I meant what I said. There was a minute's pause. Then a tender, laughing voice—tender, but laughing:

"Well, I dislike to suggest it—I am incapable of moving, myself—but—if you really want to talk it over calmly I suggest—some distance in our relative positions!"

"I hate you!" I snatched myself away from him and stood blazing. Then it all flashed over me—how absurd it was—my arguing with him and—standing there like a lamb the whole time! So I burst out laughing, and so did he. And I couldn't be tragic after that!

"I'll tell you what," I said. "There isn't any danger here, is there, so far off? The wind is the other way. I'll sit on this stone—and you'll sit on that." His was a good long distance away. "And that small stone there is just about in the middle. You mustn't pass it."

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"You mustn't pass it either." He was watching me with an awfully beguiling sort of smile about his mouth. And he didn't look in the least disturbed.

"Of course I won't. And now we can talk it out."

"All right. You're the complainant." He was waiting, arms crossed, eyes on me. But there was nothing inactive in his pose.

"You were cross about my stroke."

"Was I? I didn't want you to get a ducking. Next?"

"You acted as if you thought I had planned to take supper out with you."

"Had you? Wish I'd known it. But I was too busy thinking about you to have any sense. Next?"

"You are so impersonal. It's all theory with you."

"I've known the whole thing was a mess for months. What right has a youngster to meddle in the affairs of others? It was just a kid thing—like your being a nurse. We need to learn something about ourselves first. Moreover, there won't be time. I've got to bring my income up a notch now."

That reminded me: "I ought not to think of myself. They may need my help at home."

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He just looked at me—and I had to laugh again. For there hadn't been a single month that I hadn't had to borrow from mother or father or Ned. Somehow earning my own money made me think of ever so many more ways of spending it. And I had never repaid all of it. And the subdivision was selling like everything, and everybody felt prosperous. So I really couldn't go on being a martyr after that. And, anyway, when his eyes were on me I felt as ignorant as though I had never nursed at all.

"Your mind was somewhere else. You haven't been thinking about me this whole afternoon."

"Yes, I was trying to think how I would say it."

"But you haven't said it—"

"Will you marry me?—I love you— There! I'm glad that's over—"

"But this isn't the way I thought it would be." I was trying to bring up in my mind the other things that had worried me, about the freckles, and his hair and the tie—and the drops of perspiration. One ought to think of all the objections before it's too late. But everything had changed—and the tie was becoming, after all. And I don't see how any of the girls could have found fault with the way he looked.

He watched me for a moment with a twinkle

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in his eye and a sort of assured power that was irritating but awfully fascinating. Then he said slowly, "Suppose you show me how I ought to have done it."

That would be fun, I thought—and it—put things off. So I began:

"We would have cruised around dreamily. And you would have told me how intolerably lonely you had been since I left, and how empty everything was without me to share it with you." His eyes made me uncomfortable, so I hurried. "And after a lo-o-ong time we would have found this island. And I would say, 'Let's explore it.' And when we landed I would have gone on ahead and led you to the spring—of course there wouldn't have been any fire. And you would have said, 'What a heavenly spot! hidden, secret—like—like'—but of course you wouldn't have said that, for you wouldn't have known. And—then—then we would have had supper. And you would have kneeled down—gracefully—and made a cup from your hands for me to drink from. And you would have said, 'Drink, my Sovereign Lady'—or something like that. And you would have said, 'What a *dear* little housewife!'—that would have been when we reached the sandwiches and you began to get serious. 'What delicious cake! I didn't

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know you could do that *too!*" Then—" I paused.

"Then?" His tone was abrupt. But his eyes were still and—they made me feel fluttery.

"Then you would have arisen and come to me. And you would have taken my hand—so tenderly—and yet with respect—"

"Won!" He was on his feet—and I found I was in his arms again! I must have been so absorbed in showing him, that I passed the barrier.

"Once by fear, and once by strategy—isn't that enough?" His voice was laughing, triumphant. It made me glad and sad and ashamed all at once. And angry. I went away from him.

"That's not fair. You cheated."

"All right." He was back on his rock again. "We'll try it once more. A free field. And then? If you come—of your own free will?"

I nodded.

There we sat. And he talked, gently, his eyes on mine, quietly, and yet my heart was not quiet. He told me about—I have forgotten now. But I know that at every word, at every instant, I knew how dear he was—how different. And all the petty childish game we had been playing—knowing all the time we were holding

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off what was real—seemed very far away. And at every pause I hoped he was going to come and *make* me. At last—I couldn't help it—I was on my feet—I don't know how I got there—and must have been almost at the boundary stone.

"Oh, you darling!" He was there, somehow, on my side—or had he kicked the stone from me? "I couldn't let you—I couldn't. I'll make you mine without *that*!"

All I know is that then—and now—there isn't any place for rest but in his arms. But then—it was so new—so strange—I hardly knew what I did. But I remember stammering:

"Oh, forgive me—what will you think of me? I didn't know I was going to do—that."

And then his voice, trembling, halting:

"My—darling—my darling! She's asking my pardon for letting me kiss her—once—when it's all I can do to keep myself from doing it a million times. Are women like—that? Oh, Nancy—my girl—teach me—show me how to love you and not—hurt!"

It was altogether different going home. He was in the stern—far off, and I didn't try to paddle at all, but had the lazy-back and the cushions in the bottom of the boat as Henry

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Kent put them. There wasn't anything disturbing at all. I could be myself. I could think how lovely it was to have somebody all to myself to care for and to do things for. Only just one moment, as I turned to look back at the island, I realized what I had left there. I loved its rocks and the moss and the little bunch of tree-aigrettes from which the smoke was now curling. But I thought that I should never want to go back there—never—I could not bear to see the spring without its sheltering screen. And I turned to Henry Kent for comfort. But, of course, I couldn't expect him to understand. He was already looking—hawk-eyed—toward the other shore.

The sun was already going down. It slipped under a low-lying bank of clouds. In a minute it dropped from under them, and there was a solid metal bar lying right across the bay. That shortened and shortened. Soon the dusk began to fall.

"I won't paddle now, only guide—the wind and tide are with us." Henry spoke quietly and low—just as if he had known I wanted him to.

At last there was nothing but the placid water, the cockle-shell we were afloat in, a tall figure sitting very still in the stern, the paddle lifted now and then to make a rippling stroke. Each

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time he dipped it in there was a transparent little pool of phosphorescent green light. And the luminous drops fell gently from the paddle as he brought it to rest again across his knees. There was just a dim white blur for his face. But I knew the way his eyes were looking at me and the way his lips were set. I knew it from the way I felt.

Excepting for that it was all very peaceful. I was just saying to myself that this was the loveliest part of the day, when the *Afterme* grazed lightly against something. It was the float at Berwick.

"We're home," said Henry. And something in the way his voice dropped as he said "home" made me wonder what he had been thinking. But I couldn't ask.

Without another word he helped me to land. Then, quietly, according to our old custom, together we lifted the canoe from the water and laid her in her appointed place. Henry took out the paddles and one of the cushions, and I carried the lazy-back and the other cushion. He waited gravely while I did my share, for that, too, was a law that could not be broken.

We had climbed the steep steps to the wharf, when something made me look back. He was standing on the verge, immovable, his eyes on

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me. And as they met mine something stirred in me. For they waited, with the wistful longing of a collie, for something lacking, that only I could say. And, knowing this, my soul expanded to meet the patient nobility of their fixed desire. The dormant something leaped into my knowledge, a craving sweeter than any satisfaction that I had ever known impelled me while I laid down my burden and moved toward him. He sprang toward me—I was close against his breast, my cheek lifted with its deep heaving as he struggled for his breath.

"*My love*— You love me? *Say it!*" he said once, and then he could not speak. For one deep moment that was all, and I could hear the water lap-lapping down below.

At last I felt the moment when I had to speak, and I said, in a voice that I had never heard, a poor voice, all broken:

"I know—I know—I can say it now—forgive me that I was so hard. But how could I know—nobody ever told me—I'll say it now—shout it if you want it— No—better—close against your heart—I'm not afraid any more—nor shrinking—I am *glad* that it came—the fire!"

THE END

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